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President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/636)

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, to thank His Excellency Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé of Senegal, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the other members of the Committee for their sincere efforts in discharging this noble task and in informing world public opinion on the question of Palestine and its developments.

Once again, the General Assembly is seized of the question of Palestine in all its aspects, this question being the core issue and the quintessence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the question that represents the principal and most significant area and the focal point for the achievement of any progress in the Middle East peace process.

Significant and positive developments have taken place in the search for a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine in the context of the comprehensive peace process in the Middle East region, such as the agreement on the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 13 September 1993 in Washington; the signing of the autonomy agreements in Cairo on 14 May 1994; the recent Oslo agreement and the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of its responsibilities in Gaza and the Jericho area.

Despite these developments, however, we find the Israeli Government continuing to set conditions, and to create obstacles, in addition to its human rights violations against the Palestinians, such as curfews, confiscation of land, the demolition of houses, harassment and arrests.

These practices which have been confirmed by the international and even the Israeli media as well as the reports of organizations concerned with human rights contravene the norms of international humanitarian law as well as the terms of the agreements signed by the Israeli and Palestinian parties, and endanger the ongoing peace process which was based principally on the land-for-peace principle.

Israel's persistence in its settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in Al-Quds, is a grave matter indeed that causes concern and threatens the peace process.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in its report, has voiced

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its concern at the continued Israeli policy of settlement and land confiscation and stressed the fact that during the transitional period Israel remains duty-bound, as the occupying power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, to respect the provisions of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories and other occupied Arab territories including Al-Quds.

The persistence by the Israeli Government in the policy of Judaizing the holy sites in the occupied territories, entrenching and expanding the settlement of those territories, attempting to carve up the Ibrahimi Mosque and allowing the extremist settlers to continue to be armed, regardless of all the resolutions of the United Nations and the norms of international law, together with its prevarication in implementing some of the principal clauses of the Declaration of Principle and subsequent agreements, its selectivity and its many pretexts to slow down implementation of the agreements contradict the provisions of those agreements, especially Article III of the Declaration of Principles which stipulates:

> "In order that the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip may govern themselves according to democratic principles, direct, free and general elections will be held — and will constitute a significant interim preparatory step toward the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements". *(A/48/486, annex, art. III)*

The Israeli Government has not honoured many of its commitments, such as the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees and the opening of corridors between Gaza and Jericho. This has led to the intensification of violence and disturbances in the self-governing and other areas. This, in turn, has increased the suffering of the Palestinian people that lives under difficult conditions both inside and outside the occupied territories.

The success of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process which we all welcomed most warmly is contingent on two fundamental factors: First, that the Israeli Government should fully honour the commitments it took upon itself in the agreements it has concluded with the Palestinians so that the Palestinian people may exercise its legitimate rights to freedom and self-determination and establish its independent state on its national soil; Second, that the international community should rise to its historic responsibilities by providing political, moral and financial support to the Palestinian Authority in order for it to rehabilitate the infrastructure of the Palestinian economy after so many years of occupation and enable the Palestinian people to cope with the requirements of the transitional period in the area of socio-economic development. Such support is essential for improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the short and long term and for consolidating the ongoing peace process in the region.

My delegation finds it important to expand and promote the United Nations role in the course of the transitional period the Palestinian people has to go through before it achieves self-determination, peace, security and stability.

My delegation also wishes to reiterate the belief that the United Nations bears an abiding responsibility towards the question of Palestine in all its aspects until such time as all the elements of its final settlement have been implemented. Those elements, which include the issues of Al-Quds, the settlements, security arrangements and borders, should be dealt with according to the resolutions of international legality.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the belief that the achievement of a peaceful, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict should be founded on the land-for-peace principle and on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) which stipulate complete withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied territories including the Syrian Golan, Al-Quds and southern Lebanon and guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In this context, Israel must honour all its commitments under the agreements concluded with the Palestinian party so that the Palestinian people may be able to exercise its legitimate rights, establish its independent state on its national soil and realize its aspirations after a life of freedom and dignity like all the peoples and nations of the world.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to reiterate the support of the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Palestinian people, who have been struggling for decades for the exercise of their inalienable rights.

The sacred land of Palestine and its holy centre of Al-Quds is still under occupation and the people of Palestine are continuously subjected to inhuman treatment by the occupying forces. Many documents, including the periodic reports of the Special Committee to Investigate

Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories in documents A/49/67, A/49/172 and A/49/511, the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in document A/49/13 and the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in document A/49/35 indicate that the Palestinians have during the last year continued to suffer from the worst living conditions under the brutality of the occupying forces.

These documents have provided ample descriptions of the systematic inhuman practices of the Zionist regime, including arbitrary mass arrests and detention of Palestinians, sealing or demolition of homes, frequent imposition of curfews, sealing or closing of areas of the occupied territories, prolonged school closing, confiscation of land, expansion of settlements and shooting of Palestinian people.

The report of the Special Committee in document A/49/511 indicates that practices by Israel in the field of land confiscation have intensified and the expansion of a certain number of settlements have gained momentum since September 1993. According to the report, 40 per cent of the territory in the Gaza Strip is still taken up by settlements, military installations and so-called security zones. The report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East also confirms the continuation of housing construction in Jewish settlements, particularly in Al-Quds, and moving more settlers to those settlements.

The report of the Special Committee states that, in several instances, there is convincing evidence that settlers are systematically armed and that their violent actions have caused the death of numerous Palestinians in the occupied territories. The most tragic example of these crimes was the massacre, on 25 February 1994, of Palestinian worshippers by a member of a Zionist terrorist group at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil. The innocent Palestinians, while fasting in the holiest month, were shot from behind during morning prayers and as a result, a large number of Moslem worshippers were martyred or injured.

The increasing number of killings and detentions and the ill-treatment of detainees are among the dimensions of the horrifying situation in the occupied territories. Since the beginning of the *intifadah*, several thousand Palestinians have been killed or injured by the Israeli forces. The report of the Special Committee (A/49/511) states that during the year under review,

> "numerous instances of random shooting by troops were reported, often with live ammunition and involving minors, and the operation of undercover units has continued." (*A/49/511, p. 5*)

The conditions of detention are another source of great concern. Torture and both physical and psychological ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners, especially during interrogations, have continued, and prisoners on several occasions have staged protests against shortages of water and the lack of fresh air in their cells.

The imposition of curfews, often round-the-clock, on Palestinians cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, and the repeated sealing off or closing of areas have seriously hindered the functioning of daily life of the Palestinian people and in many cases have prevented them from reaching their schools and jobs. According to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, education services, which had been disrupted by the closure of the occupied territories in March 1993 suffered further from the increased restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli forces following the massacre at Al-Khalil and its aftermath. Those restrictions hampered access by students and teachers alike to certain schools, and students lost two or more months of training. The report of the Special Committee also indicates that the tightening of existing restrictions on movement after the Al-Khalil massacre aggravated even further the already critical economic situation prevailing in the occupied territories. The occupying forces have also imposed more restrictions on the freedom of religion by closing the area where the Ibrahimi Mosque is located and recently by the partition of the Mosque — a measure which has been denounced by Muslims world wide.

In conclusion, I should like to underline the fact that the above-mentioned crimes are being committed at the very time when the Zionists claim to seek peace in the Middle East. In fact, the continuation of the occupation constitutes a grave violation of international law, and of the human rights of the Palestinians. In our view, the current process and recent agreements will not lead to the full restoration of the inalienable individual and national rights of the Palestinians people and cannot be the foundation of a just solution, which is the cornerstone of any lasting peace in the region. The comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine lies in the full realization of all the rights of the people of Palestine,

including the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the liberation of all occupied territories.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): Events in the Middle East during the past year, indeed the past few weeks, dramatically illustrate the current transition from a situation of violent conflict to one of uneasy peace; when news of breakthroughs towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine question simultaneously brings with it reports of the perpetration of acts which not only seem inconsistent with that objective, but are in fact purposely designed to derail the peace process. While more recent events may attract greater attention, one should not relegate into the background the gruesome killing of over 50 Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron last February and the less often reported, though no less real, daily sufferings which continue to be inflicted on the Palestinian people in their occupied homeland. Indonesia is deeply saddened by the loss of innocent lives exacted by these actions and the ordeals of the people in the occupied territories.

Prince Sisowath (Cambodia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While the past year has continued to be marred by violence, we must also acknowledge the tremendous strides which have been made towards ending the long suffering of the Palestinian people since the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles on Palestinian Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Despite initial difficulties and uncertainties, the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel, signed on 4 May 1994, has *inter alia* facilitated the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. We are particularly heartened by the deployment of Palestinian police and the transfer to them of internal security arrangements, which has had a positive impact on the overall situation in those areas. But we cannot fail to note that Israeli forces continue to remain in the areas of settlements, military installations and so-called security zones.

No account of the positive developments of the past year would be complete without reference to the triumphant and long-awaited return of President Yasser Arafat to the Gaza Strip and Jericho after nearly three decades in exile. His return to assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority promises to herald a new chapter in its history. We note the determination with which the Palestinian Authority has endeavoured to carry out its tasks and responsibilities, and thereby create conditions conducive to the restoration of normalcy in the areas within the severe constraints under which it operates.

Indonesia has also noted the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibility signed between the PLO and Israel on 29 August 1994 from the Israeli military Government and its civil administration to the Palestinian Authority in the areas of health and social welfare, education and culture, tourism and taxation.

Notwithstanding the successes achieved so far, Indonesia is fully conscious of the immense challenges and difficulties that still abound. Denying the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem and of the Gaza Strip their freedom of movement to other areas of the occupied territories and to Israel, combined with the serious lack of economic opportunities for Palestinians, has created serious tensions that often erupt into violent conflict, especially in the border areas. Decades of Israeli occupation have destroyed the basic infrastructure of the occupied territories and, no less important, have disrupted the education of a whole generation of young Palestinians.

Despite all of this, however, there exists among the Palestinian people a wealth of talent, drive and creativity. These resources must be fully utilized. Indonesia firmly believes that the international community bears a solemn obligation to extend full assistance to the nascent Palestinian Authority in order to enable it to transform the occupied territories from an area of conflict and poverty into one of peace and prosperity.

In this context, we welcome the appointment earlier this year of the United Nations Special Coordinator to provide overall guidance and facilitate the effective coordination of international assistance to the Palestinian people in order to meet both their immediate and long-term needs. We also note the declaration issued by President Yasser Arafat and the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Israel at the end of their meeting in Oslo last September, which contains, *inter alia*, a number of agreed principles and needs that should guide the efforts of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in garnering much-needed international assistance for the Palestinian people.

Apart from the challenge of economic reconstruction, one difficulty, which my delegation regrets, is the continued pursuit by the Government of Israel of a number of untenable policies and practices, which, unless reversed, will obstruct further progress towards comprehensive peace. In this regard, we note

with serious concern the ongoing detention of Palestinian political prisoners inside Israel. We would also like to draw attention to continuing settlement activities by the Israeli Government, especially in and around the city of Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Israel must refrain from taking any steps that would demographically alter the status of the city of Jerusalem or prejudice future negotiations pertaining to its final status. Such untenable steps are inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the 1993 Declaration of Principles. Furthermore, it is imperative that Israel recognize the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories, restore human rights, and rescind orders which have unduly restricted the political, economic, social and cultural activities of the Palestinian people for more than quarter of a century.

My delegation has consistently taken the position that the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is an essential prerequisite for peace and security in the Middle East. As a consequence, the progress made over the past year in the talks between Israel and the PLO can be expected to have a profound impact in transforming the political and security environment in the Middle East. None the less, a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East also requires progress on the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. We are gratified to note that significant progress in this direction was recently achieved with the signing of the Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel.

Indonesia hopes that the genuine, concerted efforts by Syria and Lebanon to open up possibilities for achieving progress towards peace will be reciprocated by the Government of Israel. In this connection, we would like to reaffirm that a durable settlement of the Middle East question must entail the complete withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, from the Syrian Golan and from southern Lebanon; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; the recognition and exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination; and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1975).

The United Nations was barely two years old when the question of Palestine was first included on its agenda for consideration. Today, as the United Nations stands on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary, the question of Palestine still awaits a just and comprehensive solution. Now, more than at any other time in its history, the States Members of the Organization are presented with a unique opportunity to facilitate the realization of that long-cherished aspiration: the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination and to a sovereign, independent State on their national soil. We must seize this opportunity.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Since the last session of the General Assembly, the Middle East peace process has witnessed new, major breakthroughs. After the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in September last year, a Palestinian Authority was established recently to administer the self-rule areas. In July this year Jordan and Israel signed the Washington Declaration, which announced the end of the state of war. This was followed by the official signing of a peace treaty in October. Meanwhile, Israel's relations with other Arab countries are also improving. We welcome and express our appreciation for the positive results achieved in the Middle East peace process.

The Middle East question, with the question of Palestine at its core, has been a regional issue since the end of the Second World War. In order to seek an early and just peace settlement, the parties concerned, especially the countries and peoples of the region, have made protracted and unswerving efforts. The Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 marked a new stage in the Middle East peace process. The positive results achieved thus far in the PLO-Israel and Jordan-Israel talks constitute an important step towards the full restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and the realization of overall and lasting peace and stability in the region.

However, there is still a long way to go before a final, comprehensive and fair settlement of the Middle East question, especially the question of Palestine, can be attained, and there might be difficulties and ups and downs in the negotiations. We hope that the parties concerned will continue to adopt a flexible and practical attitude, seize the current historic opportunity and make continued efforts for the early realization of peace in the entire region.

Over the years, the international community, the United Nations in particular, has made positive and important contributions to promoting the peaceful

settlement of the Palestinian question, as well as the entire Middle East question. At present, the full-scale reconstruction of the Palestinian self-rule areas has become a heavy and pressing task facing the Palestinian Government in the areas. It requires urgent support and assistance from the international community. The United Nations should continue to play an active role in mobilizing more international support for the successful implementation of the PLO-Israel agreement and in promoting a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

All along, the Chinese Government and people have closely followed the developments in the Middle East. Over the years, we have been deeply disturbed by the failure to restore the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and have sympathized with the peoples in the region for their misfortune and suffering caused by wars. It is our sincere hope that the war will be brought to an end at an early date, enabling the countries and peoples of the region to restore peace and embark on the road of rebuilding their homeland. We have always believed that the realization of peace is in line with the fundamental interests of all the peoples in the region.

It is our consistent position that political negotiation is the most effective way to resolve disputes between States. We have made unremitting efforts to this end. We believe that the establishment of peace in the Middle East should be based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We are sincerely pleased to see the progress that has already been made, and we ardently hope for further progress.

In the future China will, as always, work with other members of the international community in striving to promote the Middle East peace process. At the same time, China is ready to participate actively in the reconstruction of the Palestinian self-rule areas. Since the signing of the PLO-Israel agreement, the Chinese Government has provided the Palestinian side with two interest-free loans and a number of grants. China will continue to make efforts within its means to assist economic recovery in the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since the convening of the Madrid conference in 1991, there have been significant and positive developments in the Middle East peace process. Those developments show that the parties concerned are interested in making progress in the search for peace. My Government welcomes those developments, which could have never taken place were it not for the resolve and determination of the region's peoples to move forward despite all the difficulties and obstacles in their path.

Following the signing of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel, we cannot but voice the hope that the peace process in the Middle East will be consolidated through full implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for Palestine and the achievement of progress on both the Syrian and the Lebanese tracks. The ultimate aim should be the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 194 (III) as well as all other relevant resolutions which set out basic principles that have to be respected. Those principles call for Israel's complete withdrawal from the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds, the Golan and southern Lebanon, in accordance with the land-for-peace principle, and for recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including, first and foremost, their right to self-determination, the right to the establishment of an independent State and the right of return for the refugees.

In this context, we are gratified by the partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and Jericho, and we are also happy that Chairman Yasser Arafat has returned to his country and has begun to take charge of Palestinian affairs. We believe he deserves our full support in order for him to overcome the difficulties he has to cope with in the course of the sensitive transitional period. We also welcome the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of a set of bilateral agreements that cover the transfer of a number of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority and provide for the strengthening of relations between the two parties. We hope these agreements will be fully implemented in good faith.

We believe there are urgent steps that need to be taken by Israel with the aim of building confidence with the Palestinian Authority, such as freeing the remaining Palestinian detainees, renouncing its settlement policy in the West Bank, including Al-Quds and desisting from all repressive acts such as the closing of borders, as such acts intensify tensions and exacerbate the economic plight of the Palestinian people.

The United Nations has a paramount role to play in the peace process. That role should continue until such time that a final and comprehensive settlement is reached and the Palestinian people is enabled to exercise all its

rights. In this context, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People bears a particularly significant responsibility towards the mobilization of public opinion and the deployment of efforts at the international level to ensure the success of the United Nations endeavours aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region. We seize this opportunity to express our appreciation for the role the Committee has performed and continues to perform, and to extend our thanks to the Committee and to its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé, for the very valuable support extended to the Palestinian people in its striving after its legitimate rights.

By the same token, we wish to commend the tremendous efforts of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on behalf of the Palestinian people. The Agency shoulders an indispensable responsibility, especially during the transitional period, towards the amelioration of the living conditions of the refugees and the enhancement of the ability of the Palestinian people to take charge of its own affairs after the transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority. Consequently, the Agency deserves every moral and financial support in order for it to continue to discharge its task.

We also commend the unremitting efforts of the Department of Public Information to increase awareness regarding the Palestinian cause and inform the world on the peace efforts in the region. These efforts should continue and adapt to current developments.

The worsening economic and social situation in Gaza is cause for grave concern. The Palestinian Authority must have sufficient financial resources in order for it to be able to shoulder its responsibilities towards its citizens. To that end, given the scarcity of resources and the lack of essential services in the region, the international community should intensify its economic assistance and financial support to initiate development projects aimed at improving the inhabitants' standards of living. We stress in this respect the need to honour the pledges and promises made by several donor countries in every stage of the peace process. Those promises should be kept, as the economic aspect of the situation is not less important than its political aspect if a just peace is to be achieved and any setback to the peace process is to be avoided.

We are happy to note the efforts deployed to organize international meetings and conferences of an economic and financial nature to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, such as the conference that took place in Washington, D.C. on 1 October 1993. We also welcome the efforts aimed at promoting regional developmental cooperation such as those we witnessed in the recent Casablanca Conference on the development of the Middle East and North Africa. In this context, we must underscore the fundamental role played by the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system which deserve every encouragement and support in order for them to continue to perform that active developmental role in the interest of the Palestinian people.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's decision to appoint a special coordinator of all forms of economic, social and other assistance provided by the United Nations to the Palestinian people. This appointment is bound to enhance the effectiveness of the efforts deployed towards that aim.

Tunisia has spared no effort in providing every possible assistance to the Palestine Liberation Organization which we hosted for 12 years. We have also participated actively in the multilateral negotiations, some of which we hosted, such as the fourth session of the Working Group on refugees and the meeting of the Steering Committee that took place in Tunisia last summer, as well as the meeting of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security scheduled to convene in Tunisia in the second week of December 1994. Tunisia will spare no effort in providing any kind of assistance, particularly in the technical field, to the Palestinian people in order to help them cope with their development and reconstruction needs and regain their freedom, security and stability.

In our view, the Middle East peace process should be based on an all-embracing perspective that takes into account all the economic, political and social aspects which should be dealt with in a well-balanced harmonious manner, especially that the achievement of the comprehensive settlement we all aspire after still faces obstacles that have to be dealt with wisely and firmly. The international community must keep in mind that this is a very delicate stage in the process and do its utmost to ensure the success of the peace process.

Mr. Al-Ni'mah (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): May I at the outset convey my delegation's sincerest thanks to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to bring peace to the Middle East in general and to restore to the Palestinian people all their rights.

I also wish to convey my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, and to the members of the Committee for all their efforts in preparing this very comprehensive and informative report, which will help to keep the cause of the Palestinian people alive until such time as God grants final victory. At this highly sensitive juncture, we are all duty-bound to assist the Palestinian people in their transition to self-government and to keep their hope and optimism alive. They must regain all their national rights, including their legitimate right to exercise self-determination and to build their own independent State on their Palestinian soil.

Since the General Assembly discussed the Palestinian question at the last session, there have been developments that give cause for optimism. But this optimism is tempered with caution because of some painful events that befell the Palestinians and overshadowed their nascent optimism. I believe that it is right to state that the most important development that gives rise to hope is that the Palestinian Authority has now assumed the responsibilities of self-government in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, and that negotiations are continuing between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel to extend self-government to the rest of the West Bank and to transfer responsibility for health, education and other areas of social and economic development to the Palestinian Authority so that the Palestinians themselves may begin to rebuild and develop their own homeland.

Needless to say, acts of violence aimed at undermining the peace process have made Israel slow down implementation of its commitments under the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement.

Also, delaying the provision of the required assistance which is expected from the international community for rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of Palestinian economy, especially in Gaza, will impede the desired progress in the area of Palestinian reconstruction and economic rehabilitation.

It is no secret to any fair-minded observer that Israel's occupation, which weighs heavily on the Palestinian people, with its fragmentation of the territory, displacement of the populace and attempted effacement of the Palestinian national identity by arbitrary measures that run counter to all international conventions and to United Nations resolutions, has impacted strongly and negatively indeed on every aspect of Palestinian life.

My delegation fully appreciates the efforts the United Nations has deployed and continues to deploy towards the cause of the Palestinian people. It is to the credit of the United Nations that it made the question of Palestine a fixed item on the agenda of its General Assembly, which it continued to discuss at session after session, since the Organization came into being. Thanks are also due to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which made informing the world with regard to the cause of the Palestinian people its highest priority and instituted the practice of celebrating an annual Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. None of this has been the privilege of any other people championed by the United Nations. By according such attention to the cause of the Palestinian people, the United Nations has demonstrated the particularity and justness of that cause, as evidenced by the special information programme on the Palestinian question undertaken by the Department of Public Information; a programme that has increased awareness of the international community of the intricacies of the Palestinian question and the Middle East situation.

One home truth must be emphasized here, namely that the Declaration of Principles is the result of the long struggle of the Palestinian people and of the long-standing Arab support and international solidarity. These were the factors that elicited a measure of response from Israel to the approaches made. However, there is a need for Israel to understand fully the requirements of this sensitive stage which make it necessary to remove obstacles and to desist from trying to opt out of the commitments it took upon itself when it signed the Declaration of Principles. The acts of violence that Israel deals with arbitrarily are yet another factor that complicates further a deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territory. In addition, there is Israel's persistence in expanding its settlement operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Al-Quds, something that causes grave concern and poses a threat to the peace process as a whole.

There can be no doubt that the present deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip is due mainly to the frustration felt by its inhabitants after the surge of hope that things are going to get better with regard to their living conditions. We hope that realization of this fact will cause the international community to boost its assistance to the Palestinian Authority in order to help that Authority rebuild the necessary infrastructures to promote economic and social development in the occupied territories and tangibly to improve the standard of living of the Palestinian people, particularly in the

Gaza Strip, where a large number of the inhabitants find themselves in very dire economic conditions indeed.

The task of building the Palestinian state and laying the foundations of its national institutions requires a concerted international effort and a great deal of support and assistance. We hope that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), along with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), agencies that have long been active in the occupied territories, will now undertake the implementation of the projects recommended by the Working Group that was established by the Secretary-General after the signing of the Declaration of Principles to explore the feasibility of various projects and activities.

In order for us to achieve all that, we call upon the factions of the Palestinian people to safeguard their national unity and the achievements they have made. We also appeal to the Government of Israel to demonstrate a genuine desire for peace and adhere to the peace process by honouring its commitments under the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement and all subsequent agreements, especially those relating to the redeployment of Israeli forces in the occupied territories, without delay and the holding of free elections in Gaza and the West Bank so that the national institutions which will be the nucleus of the independent Palestinian State may be established. Israel must also halt the building of settlements and continue to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization in good faith to resolve all pending issues. Israel should lift the seige it has laid to Gaza and the West Bank, as such seige punishes a whole people for a crime that has not been committed; by all that people that has suffered heavily enough as evidenced by what took place at the Ibrahimi mosque.

My delegation wishes to pay tribute today to the Organization and to express its solidarity with the Palestinian people, a solidarity for which the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has mobilized all its efforts.

We should like to thank the Committee for these efforts, which have mobilized the solidarity of all the peoples of the United Nations into a tidal wave of support for the Palestinians, a peace- and justice-loving people that has suffered for far too long and whose only ambition is to build its own independent State like all other Members of this Organization.

My delegation would like to take the opportunity of this international occasion to reiterate in this international forum the support of the Government and people of Qatar for the Palestinian people and of its right to build its own independent State and to develop the capabilities that will contribute to the progress of the Arab world and the prosperity of the Middle East.

Once again, we express our support for this Organization, and our support for all its efforts to uphold and strengthen the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and to mitigate the suffering of a people that has been struggling inside and outside its homeland. The Palestinian people deserve the support of all peace- and justice-loving peoples, all peoples who aspire to the realization of a world order based on justice and equity.

Proceeding from this, the State of Qatar reaffirms its continued support to the efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Such support stems from our adherence to the behests of international legality, our constant support for right and justice and our sincere wish to extend every support and assistance to the Palestinian Authority with a view to enabling the Palestinian people to fully recover all its national and historic rights, including its legitimate right to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital and its right to the ingathering of its dispersed children through the return of all refugees to their homeland in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

I do not think that it is an exaggeration to say that the success of the entire peace process in the Middle East will depend on the success of the Palestinian Authority in making the self-government experiment a concrete reality on the ground. It is no exaggeration to say that what is at stake here is the success in achieving peace, not only for the Palestinians but also for the Middle East as a whole. The question of Palestine is the quintessence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a fact that places a very particular responsibility on Israel, the international community — in particular, the two co-sponsors of the peace process and the United Nations with its specialized agencies. Israel should honour all its commitments under the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement and all subsequent agreements. The two co-sponsors, and in particular the United States, should press on with their good offices to carry the peace process in Palestine to a successful conclusion. The United Nations has to continue to work for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to

the establishment of its independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

The delegation of the State of Qatar wishes to reaffirm that the desired just and lasting peace in the Middle East can not be achieved except through the land-for-peace principle which should be implemented on a basis of international legality as embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which stipulate complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, south Lebanon and Al-Quds. It is only thus that we can hope to achieve what we aspire after, namely a comprehensive and just peace throughout the Middle East, a region which thirsts for stability, security, prosperity and development after so much suffering and decades of conflict.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): For 49 years the question of Palestine has featured prominently on the United Nations agenda. Today we continue the debate, taking stock of developments — especially the peace process — following the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 13 September last year. The Declaration was followed in May this year by the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area.

In its statement during the debate on this subject at the forty-eighth session the Malaysian delegation acknowledged and commended

> "The courage of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in assuming the leadership to bring about the forging of such a historic decision ...". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 65th meeting, p. 17)*

The latest developments must be used to secure progress in the long search for a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, of which the question of Palestine remains the core.

The peace process in which the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships are involved must put into structure the mutual confidence that would ultimately facilitate the solution of the Palestinian issue. The people and Government of Malaysia are convinced that a final solution must provide for the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to a homeland, and for the security of all States, including Israel. The final solution must be consistent with relevant United Nations resolutions — in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We recognize that there have been some positive developments, but the situation on the ground remains far from satisfactory. My delegation is deeply disturbed by the following observation quoted in the Secretary-General's report:

> "There have been delays in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and there has also been some lack of compliance with the provisions of the agreement reached". *(A/49/636, para. 4)*

Any deliberate attempt to obstruct the implementation of the peace accord within the agreed time-frame would certainly be undesirable and would be detrimental to the peace process itself. Following years of difficult and protracted negotiations, the United Nations cannot tolerate any retrograde step and must insist that all aspects of the accord be kept intact and adhered to by all parties.

If the peace process is to be sustained, the Palestinian leadership, under Arafat, must be assisted and strengthened to ensure full and timely compliance with and implementation of all the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and the Agreement. Any delay could have repercussions for the leadership that is critical to progress in the peace process. No extremism from any side can be allowed to wreck that process or to undermine leadership.

The delegation of Palestine in its statement on agenda item 37 (b) at the 68th plenary meeting, on Friday last week, emphasized that

> "... peace ... can be strengthened and secured only when the people of the region begin to feel tangibly that their daily lives have changed for the better". (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 68th meeting, p. 4)

Basic amenities, such as water and electricity, food and shelter, and health and education have to be adequately addressed. There is also an urgent need for the creation of employment opportunities. In this regard, my delegation concurs with the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization that

> "... it will be essential to promote economic and social development in the occupied territories and to bring about, as quickly as possible, tangible improvements in Palestinian living conditions, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where needs are greatest." *(A/49/1, para. 581)*

Both those statements reflect an unwavering truth, which, if it is not acknowledged, will be the end of the peace accord.

My delegation recognizes that both bilateral and multilateral assistance for the development and reconstruction of Gaza and the Jericho Strip is of crucial importance for Palestinian self-rule and subsequent progress in the peace process. It is equally important that Israel not impose hardship on the Palestinians by sealing the border, thereby preventing them from earning a living. The various choke-points against the Palestinian administration and the well-being of the Palestinian people must be removed if genuine peace is to take root.

The international community, including Israel, must help to bring about a situation which would facilitate the full expression of the freedoms of the Palestinian people, who have long been disenfranchised in their diaspora. We must recognize that we are collectively involved in the process of transition towards the birth of a nation. We cannot delude ourselves: peace will neither prevail nor last without a Palestinian homeland.

The role of the United Nations in the field of development and reconstruction in the occupied territories is equally vital to support the implementation of the peace accord and to promote peace in the region as a whole. In this regard my delegation notes from the Secretary-General's report that the United Nations has significantly enlarged its programmes of economic, social and other assistance to the occupied territories.

While welcoming the various programmes and activities carried out by the international community in the occupied territories, my delegation is dismayed to learn of the most serious and severe impediment to development: the lack of adequate funding. Out of a total of $670 million pledged for 1994, less than 25 per cent has been made good so far. Clearly the donors have to be more forthcoming in providing adequate and timely financial resources.

The Government of Malaysia will continue to render whatever assistance is within its means to help the Palestinians in their quest for self-determination and in meeting their aspiration to establish their own independent State. That is consistent with our unequivocal support for the struggle of the Palestinian people. We have always maintained that until these objectives are met the United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

For its part, Malaysia has made a modest contribution of $5 million to the national Palestinian Authority to assist in its efforts at reconstruction and development in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Malaysia is also offering relevant courses under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme to Palestinians. One of our education officers is now on secondment with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to assist in the setting up of a Palestinian educational system.

Yesterday was a special day as the United Nations observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. That important occasion should serve as a reminder to the international community of its responsibility towards the Palestinian people. Let us express our solidarity with the Palestinian people and leadership by renewing our commitments to provide the necessary support to them in their efforts to rebuild their own land and society.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The United Nations has made a practice of devoting the 29th of November, every year, to the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People's just cause which has been on the agenda of the United Nations for about five decades.

This is a cause that relates to the destiny of a people which has suffered the greatest injustice and persecution known in modern history. It relates also to the stability of a very sensitive region of the world which has been ravaged by numerous wars, occupations, tragedies and acts of aggression.

The United Nations has adopted several resolutions on the question of Palestine which, if implemented, would have contributed to lifting the injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people and to building peace and stability in the whole Middle East region.

On this occasion, the Syrian Foreign Minister addressed a message yesterday morning to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable

Rights of the Palestinian People, in which he reiterated Syria's unwavering support for the brotherly people of Palestine its just struggle to regain its legitimate national rights, especially its right to self-determination, like all other peoples of the world.

Syria's message of solidarity reiterated that Syria, whose history has been linked with the Palestinian cause and the defence of the rights of the Palestinian people, remains faithful to its principles and will continue to work towards establishing a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the land-for-peace principle, in a manner that ensures Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and guarantees to the Palestinian people the exercise of its legitimate national rights, because genuine peace cannot be built on occupation of territories or on the negation of rights.

The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, gives a very bleak picture of the unchanged situation of the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The report points out that the main cause of tension and instability in the occupied territories is the continuing presence of Israeli settlements, a matter that poses a threat to peace and security in the region.

The report also refers to the policy of confiscation of lands, which, according to many reports, has been greatly intensified since the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO. The report shows that the aggressive, violent behaviour of the settlers, who have been systematically armed, has become the main source of tension in the region.

The most telling example of the violence perpetrated by the settlers was the massacre of Palestinian worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque on 25 February 1994. The report also points out that disturbances have been handled by harsh repressive measures against civilians and that the occupying forces continue to pursue the policy of collective punishment such as curfews, and closures for long periods of time, measures which have adversely affected the already unstable economic and social situation in the region. The report pointed out that torture and maltreatment continue to be practiced during interrogations in Israeli holding centres. It also pointed out that if no clear progress is made on the enjoyment by all the residents of the occupied territories of their human rights, there is a real danger that desperation and frustration will replace support for the peace process, with all the consequences that this may entail.

Israel's insistence on holding on to Al-Quds as its eternal capital does not change the fact that Al-Quds is part and parcel of the Arab territories which Israel occupied by 1967 and that all the resolutions of international legality apply to Al-Quds.

The Israeli authorities of occupation have recently taken specific measures to divide the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in the occupied Palestinian territories under the pretext of security arrangements. The truth of the matter is that these measures aim at creating by force a new illegal situation that would give Israel rights over the Ibrahimi Mosque and legitimize the presence of settlers in the city of Hebron. The Arab group has stated its position clearly with regard to those Israeli measures in a message circulated on behalf of the Group of Arab States on 16 October 1994 (A/49/672). Israel's efforts in the context of the peace process have focused on trying to use the peace process to achieve partial settlements whereas such partial settlements have now been shown to be useless as a basis for genuine and viable peace.

Three years after the launching of the process in the Madrid Conference, Israel has been able to single out some Arab parties, and strike separate deals with them. The outward appearance of those deals may have looked like peace, but in actual fact they entrench occupation. Everyone knows that these deals have fallen far short of the aspirations and hopes of the Arabs and have put paid to the concept of comprehensive settlement. The optimism Israel propagates over what is supposed to be major progress in the peace process, is completely false, except from Israel's own view because the agreements that have been concluded so far serve only Israel's interests. It is only natural that Israel should engage in a massive campaign to deceive world public opinion, and give the illusion that the conflict in the Middle East is over and that peace has returned to the region.

The problem with the partial agreements which Israel is seeking to conclude through the singling out of each party individually is that they not only keep the occupation in place but lead also to complicating further the situation in the region and thereby perpetuate the causes of conflict and keep its embers alive. This not only contradicts the very basics of peace but also subverts the objectives for which the peace process was launched and in pursuit of which that process continues. Foremost among those objectives is ending Israel's occupation in

implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

All those who have a serious interest in the success of the peace process are well aware of the fact that those Arab parties that have opted for partial solutions and interim settlements, have weakened their own positions and have caused a serious crack in the Arab negotiating front which used to be based on coordination, consultation and adherence to agreed principles and objectives with the aim of achieving the desired peace and a just and comprehensive settlement to the problem.

Any agreement reached through individual settlements will never rise to the level of comprehensiveness and justice embodied in the resolutions of international legality. Therefore, any individual solution achieved will mean nothing but forsaking international legality, all the resolutions of the United Nations and all the principles upon which the present peace process was founded. In addition, individual settlements will preclude any possibility that the Arab parties may obtain international guarantees that any agreement with Israel will be implemented.

Separate solutions can never be conducive to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace because peace cannot exist in one part of the region while other parts continue to languish under Israeli occupation and no Arab party will be able to enjoy peace while large sectors of the Arab nation still suffer Israeli repression.

It is really strange that those who raced to bring about a Pax Israeliana still talk of such things as a unified Arab position, coordination, unity and understanding, thus raising slogans that have been made obsolete because they were not based on any true belief. If those parties had stuck to Arab coordination yesterday, today we would not have differences between any two Arab parties on claiming what is still in Israel's grasp. Syria, in seeking a just and comprehensive peace wants to do that in the open, in accordance with the principles upon which the Madrid Conference was convened, and will never bargain away any legitimate Arab right, nor will it be forced to work in secret or to hide the facts from its people.

Therefore, we must reiterate that the solution Syria wants should be a genuine comprehensive one that will restore the land to its owners and preserve Arab dignity. As for the partial separate settlements Israel is trying to bring about, they are and will continue to be rejected by us as we have no intention of considering such solutions, for they are no more than an attempt on the part of Israel to circumvent the resolutions of international legality as well as the land-for-peace principle and a manoeuvre to undermine the formula of the United States initiative upon which the peace process was founded.

Syria has discharged fully its duty towards the peace process. Syria is ready for a just, comprehensive peace today and tomorrow, as it was yesterday. It remains for Israel to carry out its own part. It also remains for the United States, as sponsor of the peace process, to shoulder its responsibilities towards its own initiative. If the United States is unwilling to take decisions for the parties concerned, the United States must at least take a stance that supports its own initiative and the ground rules on which all parties agreed.

More than once, President Clinton has stressed, as he did in his statement at Damascus, the need for a comprehensive peace in the region in accordance with the resolutions of international legality and the land-for-peace principle. That puts the onus on the Clinton Administration to move Israel towards responding to the requirements of peace and of the resolutions of international legality, in consonance with the United States initiative.

Peace is peace: there is no room for differing interpretations of what peace is, so long as it has been defined clearly and accurately in the United Nations resolutions and in the commitments of the United States Administration. We understand comprehensive peace in terms of the lines that existed on 4 June 1967. Those lines encompass all the occupied Arab territories, including southern Lebanon and the Golan.

Complete withdrawal will be followed by the peace dividends — and by the requirements of peace. When the Israeli authorities refuse to accept this principle and make numerous demands before withdrawal, in the knowledge that no one in Syria can accept such demands, they are deliberately putting the cart before the horse. By so doing, they have stalled the cart of peace and frozen the peace process and its talks. They alone are responsible for this complete freeze in the peace process and for delaying the multilateral negotiations in Washington. As for Syria, we have always been, and continue to be in favour of moving forward the peace process, and we shall continue to cooperate with any effort in that direction that is consonant with the principles agreed upon in the peace initiative and in the relevant resolutions of international legality. Syria has no preconditions with respect to the peace process, save that it be a means to

bring about peace with honour. It has no preconditions as far as peace is concerned, save that it be based on restoring Arab land and Arab rights in full.

All the facts on the ground prove that Israel remains at a far remove from the essence of the peace process. Starting with the Madrid conference, it has made it its business to restrict the peace negotiations to secondary and procedural matters. This has led to stalling the process and to freezing it in its place, as it is today. If Israel were as serious about building peace as it claims to be, it would have declared, from the very first round of negotiations in Washington, its commitment and readiness to withdraw from the Golan, from southern Lebanon and from all the other occupied Arab territories, and it would have responded to all the requirements of peace.

In every round of the Washington negotiations, and in every diplomatic effort by any United States or international envoy, the ball has remained squarely in Israel's court, as it is now. If the stalemate in the peace process is to be broken, Israel must stop pretending that it is the others and especially Syria, that are responsible for stalling the process. Israel must also renounce its illusions and desist from its intransigent and obstructive tactics, for the road to a just, comprehensive and durable peace is to be found only in ending occupation. That is what Israel should do first and above everything else.

Syria has given hundreds of thousands of victims and martyrs, not because it loves war or because combat is a hobby of ours but in defence of our rights, our dignity and our territory. That is why Syria now looks forward to moving the region out of the state of war into a state of peace, provided that rights are restored to all those who are entitled to them, an end is put to occupation and bloodshed, and human dignity is preserved. Such a peace in the region would enable Arabs and Israelis alike to live together in security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish first of all to thank the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their respective reports, which contain useful information on recent developments in the Palestinian question and on future prospects for that question which has been closely bound with the history of the United Nations since its inception.

Algeria has welcomed the mutual recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel and the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, in the understanding that this constituted a first step towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and with other United Nations resolutions.

While we welcome the progress that has followed the signing in Cairo on 4 May 1994 of the PLO-Israel agreement, we feel none the less that the situation on the ground gives reason for grave concern.

It is known that there has been much delay in implementing the agreements, that settlements continue to be built in the occupied Arab territories particularly around Al-Quds and that there have been continuous acts of violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers.

The measures adopted by the occupying authorities from time to time such as the closure of the West Bank and Gaza for indefinite periods and thereby depriving tens of thousands of Palestinian workers of the means of earning a living place the Palestinian Authority in a precarious position at a time when the economic and social suffering of the Palestinian people worsens.

The economic hardship resulting from 27 years of occupation continues, policies of repression are still in place and the forcible confiscation of Palestinian lands for the building of new settlements continues unabated. As to the promises to improve conditions of living in the occupied territories, such undertakings now come face to face with the prevarication of the parties and States that promised to provide assistance to the Palestinian people once the Declaration of Principles was signed. Failure by those parties to keep their promises has impacted negatively on the political and psychological climate and has had a deleterious effect on Palestinian efforts to achieve the objectives of the transitional period.

It is self-evident that if we wish the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel to succeed socio-economic development in the Palestinian territories must be bolstered.

In this regard, the international community is now called upon more urgently than in the past to intensify its support and assistance to the Palestinian Authority in Gaza.

Here we wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the specialized agencies and United Nations bodies in providing economic and technical assistance to the Palestinian people.

I should like also to mention here the steps taken by the Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and, in particular, his appointment of a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to coordinate the work of all the agencies of the United Nations organizations that are active in the field.

We reaffirm the abiding responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until such time as the question is resolved in all its aspects, as the Organization is the most appropriate body to serve as guarantor of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region. We hold that the United Nations must play a key role in building peace in the Middle East region and wish to reaffirm also the continued need for its participation in the peace process and in supporting the national Palestinian Authority.

Although resolution of the issues relating to Al-Quds, the settlements, the right of return and the question sovereignty have been deferred to a later date and will be addressed in the permanent status negotiations, we believe that the importance of these issues and the international community's posture regarding them should be clearly and specifically spelled out by the United Nations at this session of the Assembly. They are pressing matters. Also the question of the holy sites in Al-Quds and Hebron in particular deserve particular attention by the international community in view of the significance and the extremely sensitive nature of the issues involved.

The Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel of 26 October 1994 constitute a major turning point in the Middle East. While these two agreements bespoke the desire to implement the stipulations of the resolutions of international legality, we believe it is essential to make decisive progress on the Syrian-Israeli and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks in the very near future.

We wish to reaffirm here Algeria's support of Syria's legitimate claim and its right to recover the entire Golan on the basis of the peace process and the resolutions of international legality. We also voice the same support to the efforts of the Lebanese Government to extend its sovereignty over the whole of the Lebanese territory in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) which calls for Israel's complete withdrawal from all the occupied Lebanese territories to the internationally recognized borders.

The region of the Middle East has endured tremendous suffering and its human and material resources have been bleeding for far too long. It is now high time the region enjoyed peace and stability and channelled its resources to the achievement of comprehensive development in the context of a comprehensive and just peace which, in turn, must be built on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) that are founded on the land-for-peace principle. We are fully convinced that progress, prosperity and economic and social well-being in the region can be achieved through the consolidation of confidence-building measures which would lead ultimately to the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from the region while at the same time restoring full legitimate rights and sovereignty over its soil, including Al-Quds, to the Palestinian people.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine notes with satisfaction the progress achieved recently within the framework of the Middle East settlement that gives hope for establishing lasting peace and stability in the region after decades of hostility and wars.

Ukraine has always attached paramount significance to international efforts aimed at a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It has stood for the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with universally recognized norms and principles of international law.

With its statements, Ukraine has, in every way, welcomed the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles in September 1993, as well as the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area in Cairo in May 1994. These agreements have reduced tension in the region and have opened the way towards the creation of Palestinian autonomy, demonstrating the correctness of the course chosen by the parties. The progress in negotiations between Israel and Jordan which culminated in the conclusion of the Washington Declaration and the signing of the Peace Treaty between the two countries was another step towards a comprehensive Middle East settlement. Ukraine expressed its support of this step by the relevant statement of its Foreign Ministry. We consider it

important that the other parties concerned, especially Syria and Lebanon, should be involved in further negotiations in the framework of the peace process.

Mr. Mwaungulu (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The latest peace-making initiatives, as well as the documents signed, have yet to be implemented. Peace in the Middle East is closer than ever before in spite of all the obstacles created by those advocating extremism and destabilizing the situation. Ukraine condemns any manifestations of political extremism and terrorism, and calls on all the parties concerned to show restraint and a readiness to compromise, and to refrain from any action that would undermine the ongoing dialogue. This is absolutely essential for increasing trust and cooperation.

Ukraine is interested in peace in the Middle East and in the development of good-neighbourly, equal relations with all countries of the region and is ready to promote, in every possible way, the further development of the peace process, as well as a speedy solution to all issues in the Middle East conflict. We also stand for a political settlement of not only the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also of those among the Arab countries as well.

Worthy of note is the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel to hold a conference on security and cooperation in the Middle East and to transform it into a permanent body for arms control, for banning acts of aggression and for cooperation in the economic and social fields. The Casablanca Summit on economic issues of the Middle East and north Africa, and the Declaration that was signed, have demonstrated that the countries of the region are willing to cooperate in establishing comprehensive peace, generating sustainable economic growth and improving the living conditions of the population.

We commend the readiness of the Secretary-General, as expressed in his report A/49/636, to

> "make every effort to ensure that the United Nations system contributes its utmost in the fields of economic and social development, which will be essential in building peace throughout the region". *(A/49/636, para. 8)*

Ukraine believes that the United Nations, given the great experience it has acquired in that area over nearly five decades, should be prepared to undertake any role that would be helpful to the parties in advancing the peace process.

Let us not forget that the Organization and its organs have a permanent responsibility concerning the central issue of the conflict, the question of Palestine, until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached.

In this regard, we feel it necessary to recall the important contribution the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People continues to make as a forum for dialogue, analysis, exchange of experience, the mobilization of public opinion and action in support of the peace efforts and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as their socio-economic development.

As a member of the Committee, Ukraine will spare no effort to ensure that it achieves maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and further adjusts its work programme in the light of developments, in order to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

Yesterday we commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which demonstrated once again the support of the international community for their legitimate aspirations.

In this regard, allow me to conclude my statement by quoting from the Message of the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Gennadi Udovenko, on that occasion:

> "The year of 1994 will undoubtedly go down in the history of the Palestinian people as one of remarkable new progress on the way towards comprehensive, fair and lasting peace in the Middle East."

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) *(interpretation from French)*: On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly, at its second session, adopted resolution 181 (II), in which it approved the partition plan that provided for the end of the Mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the creation of the Arab and Jewish States scheduled for 1 October 1948 at the latest.

On 14 May 1948 the United Kingdom withdrew its forces and thus terminated the Mandate. On that day, the State of Israel was created on the territory allocated to it pursuant to the partition plan. After the founding of the State of Israel, hostilities broke out between the Arab and Jewish communities, and there were acts of violence.

Even more regrettably, we witnessed a succession of bloody wars between Israel and its Arab neighbours, which made the situation in the region unstable and precarious.

In 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded. By its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, the General Assembly solemnly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination, to independence and to national sovereignty. During that same year, the PLO was invited by the General Assembly to participate in its work as an Observer and as the representative of the Palestinian people.

These are the major events in one of the most protracted conflicts the world has known: the question of Palestine. The parties to the conflict did not recognize one another and held virtually no contacts. In a situation of constant tension each party, while turning its back on the proposals of its partners, constantly advocated its own approach and pressed for its own course of action as being the one in their view most likely to bring about a solution to the problem. Despite the countless efforts of the international community, the situation worsened further and, regrettably, nothing indicated that an overall political solution was in sight.

A new chapter in this history then began towards the middle of 1993, when talks took place in Oslo, Norway, under the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the late Johan Joergen Holst, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). These talks, which the world had been calling for, happily resulted in the conclusion of an agreement known as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. In agreeing to mutual recognition, Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 signed that historic agreement in Washington.

Pursuant to the agreement, the Palestinian Authority was recently set up in Gaza and in the Jericho area. Notwithstanding the financial and other difficulties encountered, the Palestinian Authority seems determined to press forward with the implementation of the agreement. The Jewish State has also opted for a positive attitude. Thus, the peace process still has a chance of succeeding.

Consistent with its policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world regardless of their socio-political regimes, the Lao People's Democratic Republic warmly welcomes the positive developments that have taken place in that region. It hopes that these developments will help the parties to the conflict to continue their negotiations in good faith with a view to achieving an overall settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), relating to the withdrawal of Israel from the territories occupied since 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, and in particular the right to self-determination. We welcome this major step forward, which marks a crucial turning point in the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

However, in view of the repeated acts of violence that we have been witnessing, it would seem that much remains to be done before peace is established. The international community should therefore redouble its efforts and lend a very supportive hand to the noble endeavours to promote the peace process. For their part, the Lao Government and people take this opportunity to reaffirm their active solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle, under the leadership of the PLO, to recover their inalienable national rights. We will do all that we can to make a contribution — albeit a modest one — to the quest for peace in the region at this important transitional stage.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): I am very pleased to speak before the General Assembly on agenda item 40, "Question of Palestine". Members may recall that at the last session of the General Assembly, the international community warmly welcomed the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Since then, we have witnessed further developments in the Middle East peace process, which began in Madrid in October 1991.

For many decades, the people and the Government of Viet Nam have been following very closely and with great interest the evolution of the situation in the Middle East. Like the rest of the international community, we welcomed the signing by Israel and the PLO of a series of important bilateral agreements in implementation of the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993. The

Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO, Representing the Palestinian People, laid the groundwork for strengthening the economic base of the Palestinian people and for enabling it to exercise its right of economic decision-making in accordance with its own development plan and priorities. The Protocol was subsequently incorporated into the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May 1994. The Agreement sets forth a number of arrangements regarding the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. These include the scheduled withdrawal of Israeli military forces, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the transfer to it of various areas of authority.

We were very pleased to see the return of President Yasser Arafat to the Gaza Strip to assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

Another event of significance was the signing, on 29 August 1994, by Israel and the PLO of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities regarding the West Bank.

While welcoming these positive developments, we earnestly hope that these agreements will be fully and effectively implemented. The situation on the ground shows that numerous difficulties and obstacles still remain. This is only the beginning — albeit an important one — of a difficult and complicated transition period. All concerned parties, therefore, should continue to strengthen their efforts.

We are very concerned at the acts of violence that continue to inflict death and suffering upon the Palestinian people. Moreover, violations of the human rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in the occupied areas are of great concern to the international community. We hope that an end will soon be put to these acts.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35) presents us with a comprehensive review of the tremendous work carried out by the United Nations system for the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine. In this regard, my delegation wishes to place on record its appreciation of the good work done by the Committee and the secretariat in the Division for Palestinian Rights.

My delegation shares the view of many others in this Hall that the international community should render more concerted support to the peace process, which has started moving in the right direction. The United Nations, whose purpose under the Charter is to maintain international peace and security and to promote development, should play a more active role in the Middle East peace process. We believe that a satisfactory final settlement to the question of Palestine must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), on the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and on the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, primarily the right to self-determination.

For the cause of the Palestinian people to succeed, the United Nations organizations and agencies should provide that people with much-needed economic, technical, and development assistance. With regard to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, we believe it will make more efforts in the implementation of the mandate given it by the General Assembly in order to contribute to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

In his message to the Secretary-General, to the Chairman of the Committee and to President Yasser Arafat yesterday, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the President of my country once again expressed the unswerving support of the Government and the people of Viet Nam for the just cause of the Palestinian people and the strong belief that, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian people will attain its final goal.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): Our debate on the question of Palestine takes place at a time when the Middle East peace process is entering a delicate phase in its implementation and when there are still sizeable obstacles to be overcome. Like the international community as a whole, Mauritania welcomed the dialogue initiated in Madrid, which to date has yielded positive results leading towards a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. My country is resolute in its desire to support all efforts to make it possible to establish a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The question of Palestine is the very crux of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and it should remain at the centre

of United Nations concerns. It is important for the United Nations to be involved in all stages of the negotiations and to make a positive contribution to the solution of this thorny problem.

In this context, Mauritania welcomes the appointment last June of Ambassador Terje Rod Larsen as Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. Nevertheless, we believe that over and above programmes of economic, social and other types of assistance, the United Nations should be even more involved in all aspects of the process, where its great experience in the region may help to bring the parties concerned closer together.

In the current delicate phase of the Middle East peace process, it is essential that the international community remain active politically, economically and otherwise, in order to encourage the parties concerned to move ahead in their efforts and achieve this long-sought objective. As has been amply demonstrated by recent experience in South Africa, it is not enough for the parties concerned simply to agree to sit down at the negotiating table; they must also be inspired by the same genuine desire to live in a new climate of peace, and the international community must continue to support and encourage them.

For this reason we appreciate the very useful role played recently by the Security Council when it adopted resolution 904 (1994) after the tragic events that took place in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. While welcoming this very positive role, which contributed directly to the peace process, we believe that both the Security Council and the General Assembly should always ensure respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and the validity of the resolutions they have adopted in this area. In the same spirit, Israel should be encouraged to finally accept the *de jure* applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is an indisputably important way of strengthening confidence between the sides.

The recent incidents in Gaza have shown how urgent it is to tackle squarely and resolutely the immense socio-economic problems that the Palestinian people continue to face. The commitments made at the pledging conference in Washington last year are taking some time to materialize on the ground, and this delay has undoubtedly made the peoples of the region even more impatient to enjoy the fruits of the long-awaited peace. The establishment of the autonomous Palestinian administration was a stirring sign of hope, which is why it is important to supply it promptly with the material and technical means required to meet expectations. For this reason, we regret that the Paris international conference planned for 9 September on assistance to the Palestinian Authority did not come about. We hope, none the less, that the international community will continue to provide economic and financial support to the new Palestinian administration.

The positive developments that have taken place in the process leading to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian problem and, moreover, of the Arab-Israeli conflict, should not obscure the fact that the ultimate objective is the restoration of peace in the entire region. However significant these developments may be, they represent only the first stage in the transitional period, which should ultimately lead to the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, and the Palestinian people's exercise of its inalienable rights, including the right to establish its own State. As long as those objectives have not been achieved, the international community has the duty to be active and to continue to support the Palestinian people in its struggle, under the leadership of its legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), until its inalienable rights have been restored.

Mr. Graf zu Rantzau (Germany): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union, Austria and Finland.

Since 13 September last year it has been possible to speak for the first time in decades of a genuine chance to settle the question of Palestine, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The signing of the Declaration of Principles was welcomed throughout the world as a historic breakthrough towards solving one of the most intractable conflicts in our time.

It was a decision of great vision and courage when the leaders of both sides agreed to sit down and negotiate directly on how to settle this conflict. After decades of bitter enmity, they opened the door for reconciliation, not only between the Palestinians and the Israelis, but also between all the peoples of the region. This new prospect for peace and welfare must not be lost again. Despite all the progress made during the past year, the recent dramatic and painful events in Gaza have reminded us how dangerously volatile the situation remains. However, violence and terror must not get the upper hand again and destroy the hope for peace.

There is no alternative to the peace process. Those who try to derail it should look at the past and understand

that acts of terror will inevitably harm the interests of their own people and deprive yet another generation of a life in peace and prosperity. In a rapidly evolving world, neither the Israelis, the Palestinians nor anyone else in the region can afford to continue to spend so much energy and resources on a conflict which no one can win. Peace, prosperity and security in this tormented region can only be achieved if no party is excluded.

The European Union and its member States wish to contribute to the peace in the Middle East. They support the peace process politically, economically and financially. The European Union is the most important donor to the Palestinian territories. In 1993 it pledged 90 million ECU, and for the period from 1994 to 1998, the total is 500 million ECU. These funds are supposed to be used primarily for setting up the Palestinian Authority and for the improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinians. Within the framework of its Joint Action in Support of the Peace Process, the Union assists in setting up the Palestinian police force and in the preparation of the Palestinian elections. It has also declared its readiness to participate in the temporary international presence in the self-rule areas.

Improvements in the political sphere and the economic and social sphere go hand in hand; they are mutually reinforcing. Therefore, it is very important to build not only political, but also economic trust. We are convinced that at this stage in the establishment of Palestinian autonomy and its institutions it is of paramount importance that the people of the territories be made aware, in concrete terms, of the positive effects of the political changes which have been taking place for more than a year.

International aid can only be complementary to the efforts of the parties directly concerned. Therefore, the Palestinians and the Israelis should make every possible effort to enhance the effectiveness of those organizations and agencies dealing with the flow and management of financial assistance provided by donors. Furthermore, every step should be taken to ensure the speedy implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian economic agreement of 29 April 1994, which refers to the unimpeded access of Palestinian workers and products to Israel.

While the European Union reiterates its readiness and resolve to continue to contribute to the success of the peace process, it calls upon other donors, and especially those from the region itself, to carry their share of the international burden. We welcome the successful meeting on 28 November 1994 in Brussels between the European Union Ministerial Troika, the Foreign Minister of Israel and the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, which focused on a more rapid disbursement of aid.

The European Union will continue to play an active, constructive and balanced role in support of the peace process. It is firmly committed to contributing to the success of this process. To achieve this goal, the European Union will cooperate closely with the regional parties, the sponsors of the peace process and the participants in the relevant multilateral forums. The European Union continues to urge both sides to pursue their search for solutions to outstanding issues in the context of the bilateral and multilateral tracks and on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It urges both parties to respect the agreed timetables.

Mr. Villarroel (Philippines): The ongoing peace process between Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Arab countries continues to give rise to hopes for a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We are encouraged by the dramatic breakthroughs that have taken place since the process began in Madrid. We welcome the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan three days ago. We hope that this positive development will spur efforts to further advance the peace negotiations among the parties concerned.

We are alarmed that despicable acts of violence have been committed to throw the process off track. But the courage and determination of the leaders of the region to confront the issue through peaceful dialogue have, fortunately, prevailed. Further acts of violence would only serve to prolong the agony and suffering of the Palestinian people.

The fates of the Arab and Israeli peoples are inextricably linked. Both peoples have made the momentous decision to try to tread the path to peace together. One cannot make it without the other as they undertake this difficult journey. It is therefore imperative that the parties concerned undertake meaningful confidence-building measures to create a climate of openness and mutual trust.

The Philippines is at one with the international community in its resolve to work relentlessly for the right of the Palestinian people to govern themselves and for the right of all States in the region to a secure existence

within internationally recognized boundaries. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the interim self-governing Authority in Gaza and Jericho and look forward to the early realization of the second implementation agreement on elections.

We recognize that the road that lies ahead in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is fraught with uncertainties but that it is, on the other hand, also filled with infinite possibilities.

The development of the economic and social infrastructure in the occupied territories is vital in bringing about a qualitative improvement in the daily lives of the Palestinian people and in strengthening the foundation of their society. It is therefore essential that the international community continue to lend a helping hand in this regard.

We note the significant enlargement of the United Nations programmes of economic, social and other assistance to the occupied territories in support of the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the promotion of peace in the region as a whole.

We look forward to more active United Nations participation in the multilateral negotiations on Middle East regional issues. We welcome the appointment of Ambassador Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to facilitate effective coordination and intensification of United Nations assistance.

As we reaffirm our support for the ongoing peace process and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements aimed at resolving the question of Palestine, which is the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we look with anticipation to the early completion of the transition process towards the establishment of a fully independent Palestinian State.

It is our hope that a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of this conflict between and among the parties in the region will finally lead to peace, reconciliation and harmony among all the descendants of Abraham.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria wishes to point, with a sense of vindication and accomplishment, to the fruits of the optimism it so strongly advocated during the deliberations on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Nigeria remains fully convinced that the unfolding positive developments in the Middle East peace process are the inevitable fruit of the realism exhibited by all the parties concerned. That spirit has indeed been motivated by the radical realignment of approach in our deliberations on the issues at hand, as well as by a new sense of moderation and compromise.

My delegation notes the positive developments in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process that have resulted, *inter alia*, in the signing on 4 May 1994 at Cairo of the first implementation agreement of the Declaration of Principles - namely, the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. We also welcome other agreements that were reached regarding Palestinian self- determination and, in particular, the recent declaration of intention to negotiate the second implementation agreement, on the elections.

Today, as we applaud the progress in the various facets and stages of the negotiations leading to the complete autonomy of Palestine, the historic agreement between Israel and Jordan and the slowly unfolding progress towards direct discussions between Israel and Syria, we are convinced of the existence of the requisite political will on the part of the international community to achieve a final settlement and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We are, of course, deeply concerned by the serious impediments in the form of violent opposition to the peace process. Although this opposition stems from frustrations caused by decades of repressive occupation and gross violations of human rights, we think it is not insurmountable. In this respect, the measures stipulated in Security Council resolution 904 (1994), some of which are currently being implemented, need to be enhanced.

My delegation's position on developments in the Middle East is comPletely compatible with the views contained in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We also share the confidence of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories that the early transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinians in the fields of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism will bring about an immediate improvement in the daily lives of the population of the occupied territories. The determination, wisdom and spirit of understanding which led to the signing of the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement must be translated into reality through compliance with all universally accepted standards of international

humanitarian and human-rights law. My delegation also hopes that important issues, such as those relating to settlements, the abuses committed by settlers, the release of prisoners and the indiscriminate imposition of collective punishments, will be given urgent and careful consideration to ensure that the momentum generated by the signing of the historic agreements is not lost. We believe that a positive approach in this area could further strengthen the peace process and enable all the people in the region to live in harmony, dignity and peace.

My delegation acknowledges the very constructive deliberations in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, particularly the enormous resources placed at the disposal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA) in order to undertake the additional role of providing socio-economic structures in the territories under the peace implementation programme. In this connection, my delegation calls on the international community to increase its support for the activities of UNRWA in order to enable the Agency to carry out its mandate effectively. In the same vein, we would like to urge full compliance by Member States with all the resolutions relevant to the question of the occupied territories adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights, as well as by agencies of the United Nations system such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

My delegation also agrees fully with the recommendation that an end be put to all measures that adversely affect the economic and social situation of the populations of the occupied territories. In this connection, the importance of the full enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedom must be underscored. The imposition of curfews, the destruction of property, and discriminatory measures concerning the use of water resources can only prevent attainment of the desired goal.

As despair regarding the Middle East crisis continues to give way to concrete achievements, our deliberations should continue to be devoid of acrimony and blind disagreement. Let the language and content of any decision we take on the items under consideration be in consonance with the achievements on the ground. In that way we shall be making a contribution to the final solution to the crisis.

As a firm believer in the right of all peoples to self-determination and as a long-time member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, Nigeria has total faith in this approach.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/49/PV.72

General Assembly
Forty-ninth Session

Official Records

72nd Meeting
Wednesday, 30 November 1994, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 40 *(continued)*

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/636)

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): The blessings of the post-cold-war era may not have been evenly distributed, but for some they have brought about real salvation and redemption from ideological and racial damnation. I speak as one who has experienced first-hand the salvation and redemption of a people — the people of southern Africa — from the pernicious forces of darkness represented by the racist ideology of apartheid. I would not be so irreligious as to make the heretical claim that southern Africa today stands triumphant at the gates of Heaven, but I am certain that the Assembly shares the celebratory euphoria we feel over the total liberation of our region. Beyond belief, southern Africa in its entirety is free at last.

Palestine, like southern Africa, has endured for too long the trials and tribulations of war and death without mercy. With the signing last year of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), one would have thought a credible abandonment of the old negative posture in the Middle Eastern politics of negotiations by war had been initiated and had engendered in its wake the prospect that soon that troubled region, like the southern African region, might enjoy some deliverance from its painful past. Not quite yet. Unfortunately, both Palestinians and Israelis have yet to enjoy peace, despite the recent changes in the area, because there remain, in that troubled region, those who still derive comfort from the peace of the grave. A negotiated peace is not in their interest. Theirs are the politics of the absolute, so reminiscent of the politics of the practitioners of apartheid.

The peace process in that dangerous area of the Middle East is too vital, too crucial, to be allowed to wither in the hands of those who believe they have a stake only in the perpetuation of violence. The international community is a stakeholder in that process and must ensure that, in spite of the terrible odds against it, the process is nurtured and pursued to its logical conclusion.

It is painfully obvious, however, that so long as the fruits of the limited autonomy enjoyed by the Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho amount to nothing more than vague symbols of empowerment in the form of police uniforms and a flag, while poverty and squalor continue to be the order of the day in the area, with nothing in sight to indicate imminent relief from misery for its inhabitants, the naysayers, the nihilists, will continue to have a field-day. Clearly, therefore, the international community will have to do more to make the partial change that has taken

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place in the occupied areas a lasting reality. Palestinians cannot eat flags and police uniforms. Empowerment deriving from the conferment of autonomous authority in Gaza and Jericho must bring with it a materially transforming effect on the lives of its beneficiaries, the Palestinian people, who have for so long languished in such terrible deprivation.

There is also one ineluctable consideration that can be lost sight of only to the inevitable detriment of what has been achieved so far: the pace at which the agreement between Israel and the PLO is implemented. It goes without saying that half measures in any process of desperate political change can never win a contest against impatience. The slower the pace of change in the occupied areas of the West Bank and Gaza, the more heightened the impatience of its intended beneficiaries, and the bolder and the more vicious the opposition from those who advocate change by revolution.

Nevertheless, Botswana has never concealed the enthusiasm with which we have welcomed and supported the discovery of some common ground between the people of Israel and their brethren, the people of Palestine. Our support for peaceful change in the area is inexorable, and impervious to equivocation. We see the normalization of relations between Israel and Jordan as a happy portent for the advent of a new era of peace through justice for all in the Middle East.

That is why we cannot but continue to urge those neighbours of Israel that have not done so to come to some accommodation with the Jewish nation, and we urge the Jewish nation to do the same, so that a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the area of the Middle East, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), can at last be established. It can be done. The world has changed. The Middle East is by no means an exception to the universal trend, now firmly established, that no problem, however intractable it is considered, is beyond a negotiated solution. If this were not true, I can assure the Assembly, we who not long ago were bereft of any hope for change in our lifetime in South Africa would still be living under apartheid.

Mr. Owada (Japan): It would be no exaggeration to declare that 1994 has been a historic landmark in the long years of efforts to establish lasting peace and stability throughout the Middle East. The progress we have witnessed this past year is both genuine and dramatic. As a result, the entire political structure of the region is undergoing a fundamental change.

In September 1993, the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements was signed in Washington as a blueprint for peace between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The international community registered its full support for this achievement through General Assembly resolution 48/58, which was adopted with the positive votes of an overwhelming majority of Member States, including Israel and almost all the Arab States.

In Cairo on 4 May of this year, the Israelis and Palestinians concluded a second historic agreement, as a result of which the Palestinians have at last begun to manage their own affairs in Gaza and Jericho. We look forward to the transfer of power and responsibilities to the Palestinians in the West Bank, as agreed by the two parties in the Declaration of Principles.

Another historic advance was made just last month with the signing of a peace treaty by Israel and Jordan. This achievement is of particular importance because, based upon the Washington Declaration signed in July 1994, which terminated the state of belligerency between those two countries, it opened the way for them to explore the potential for future bilateral cooperation in such areas as the economy, tourism, natural and human resources, and infrastructure. Japan pays tribute to the Governments of Jordan and of Israel for their courageous efforts to establish a partnership for peace.

It is the ardent hope of Japan that this achievement will in turn be followed by breakthroughs in the negotiations between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon. Indeed, the role of Syria in our efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is absolutely critical; the security and stability of the region cannot be ensured until there is peace between Syria and Israel. We call upon those two countries to pursue vigorously the efforts to translate their desire for peace into concrete action. Japan will support and assist their endeavours to the best of its ability.

Casting an ominous shadow on the progress that has been made towards peace is the recent wave of terrorism, which has claimed a number of innocent lives and brought untold sorrow to the families of the victims. On this occasion, I should like, on behalf of the Government of Japan, to convey my heartfelt sympathy to those whose lives have been shattered by the hateful acts of terrorists. May the families of the victims find consolation in the knowledge that the tide of history is overwhelmingly against terrorism, and that peace will

ultimately prevail. Concerted action by all the parties in the region is required to combat and eliminate terrorism in all its forms. The international community must back up those efforts with effective and cooperative measures to cut off foreign support for regional terrorist organizations. Although the situation remains fragile, the vast majority of the peoples of the region are tenacious in their struggle for peace. The international community will not allow that struggle to be thwarted.

The ultimate goal of the peace process is not simply the cessation of hostilities; rather, it is the creation of a stable environment in which all the peoples of the region can pursue their livelihood and look forward to a more prosperous future. It is essential that the Palestinian people be able to enjoy tangible and direct benefits of peace. Although considerable progress has been made, the conditions in which Palestinians live in Gaza and the West Bank remain tense, and Palestinians will continue to experience frustration unless they see tangible improvements in their daily lives. The violent clash in Gaza earlier this month between Palestinian civilians and the police force of the Palestinian Authority underscores the fragility of the situation and the desperate and urgent need for assistance from the international community.

There is much more hard work to be done to ensure that Palestinian self-government can actually function in Gaza and Jericho. Thus, it is incumbent upon all of us who want to see peace prevail in the region to extend substantial political and economic support to the Palestinian self-government authorities without further delay. Conscious of this common responsibility of ours, Japan for its part has committed about $200 million for Palestinian assistance efforts over two years. In particular, to help meet the initial cost of administration of the territories, Japan, which is not a direct party to the peace process, has nevertheless been actively participating in joint assistance efforts, offering to allocate $10 million for residential housing for the police force in Gaza, $8.5 million for the Holst Fund for recurrent costs, and $5 million for the clean-up project in Gaza.

On the issue of Arab boycott of Israel, my delegation is gratified to note that in September of this year the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council announced a virtual end to its practice. Japan welcomes and highly appreciates this initiative, since it contributes greatly to the spirit of reconciliation and mutual trust that is growing among the nations of the region. It is the belief of my delegation that it will open enormous trade and investment opportunities, enhancing the economic well-being of all in the region.

As a result of the Madrid Conference of 1991, multilateral talks have started, with working groups on five subjects: the environment, arms control and regional security, refugees, water, and economic development. The talks are expected to address practical problems shared by the nations of the region, and thereby serve to build confidence among the parties involved in the region. In fact, they have already succeeded in starting the process of promoting the development of normal relations among the nations of the Middle East, and are thus playing an important role in advancing peace and stability in the region. Japan has been participating actively and constructively in these working groups.

At its most recent meeting, held in Bahrain last month the environmental Working Group, over which Japan presides as its Chairman, adopted a code of conduct that establishes principles and guidelines for environmental protection and cooperation in the region. Japan believes that this practical achievement will contribute to promoting greater social and economic cooperation in the region, given the degree of interdependence that can exist there.

The Middle East and North African Economic Summit of government officials and leading businessmen, held in Casablanca last month, provides another useful model for promoting economic cooperation for regional development projects. These region-wide efforts reflect a determination to foster an environment in which Palestinians, Israelis and their Arab neighbours can enjoy the fruits of peace. In pursuit of that goal, they have the active and steadfast support of the international community. Japan, for its part, will spare no effort to promote the ongoing peace process in the Middle East and to support and further cooperate in the social and economic development of the region.

Mr. Huaraka (Namibia): In his statement during the general debate, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, stated:

> "The peace process in the Middle East continues to gain momentum and wider acceptance in the region and beyond it. ... centre-piece of this peace process is ... full realization of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which must lead to complete nationhood." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 21st meeting, p. 21)*

The ongoing peace process, which began in Madrid, and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements will, hopefully, lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That is what the world wants, and, even more, that is what the Palestinian people want. Indeed, that is what the region deserves.

In paragraph 1 of resolution 48/158 D of 20 December 1993 the General Assembly:

> "*Reaffirms* the need to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects".

Since that resolution was adopted, positive developments on the Palestinian-Israeli track for the peace process have taken place.

Since the signing by the Government of Israel and the PLO of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which took place on 13 September 1993 at the White House in Washington, the peace process has achieved significant results and grown deep roots on the way to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed in Cairo on 4 May 1994, and the subsequent launching of early empowerment represent important and irreversible steps forward in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

The signing of the Washington Declaration, on 25 July this year, and of the peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan, on 26 October this year, represent yet another historic achievement that will generate further momentum in the Israel-Palestinian negotiations, and encourage progress in the Israel-Lebanese and Israel-Syrian tracks of the peace process.

During past years the Namibian Government followed with keen interest the bilateral negotiations between the parties concerned, and it continues to do so. It is my delegation's fervent hope that the discussions between Israel and the PLO will steadily progress and solidify through the transitional period. Based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), such steps will be important in establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

While my delegation is aware that there have been delays in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and some lack of compliance with the provisions of the agreement reached, such as the absence until now of the safe passage between Gaza and Jericho, it nevertheless hopes for positive progress and would urge full implementation of the Declaration of Principles within the agreed time-frame.

My delegation stresses the need for the United Nations to continue to play an active role in the current peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. It is against this background that my delegation welcomes the progress made so far in this regard, particularly in the provision of economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinian people. Now is the most trying time for the Palestinian people, a time when they need to be assisted in order to reconstruct their country. The enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights is a crucial component of the realization of their right to self-determination.

My delegation commends the creation of a coordinating mechanism for United Nations activities throughout the occupied territory, through the appointment of the United Nations Special Coordinator at Under-Secretary-General level; it is a welcome development.

My delegation would fail in its duty if it did not congratulate and express its solidarity with the PLO and all the Palestinian people on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In the same vein, we congratulate the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and his colleagues in the Bureau, on a job well done.

Finally, my Government will continue to give all the support the Secretary-General might require to ensure that the United Nations system contributes its utmost to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, which is essential in building peace throughout the Middle East.

Mr. Homarah (Yemen) *(interpretation from Arabic):* I hope that the few words I am going to say will not be classified among the footnotes of the voluminous statements made over the years by the Israelis and the Arabs on the question of Palestine. They have made so very many statements and made war for about half a century, then, after all that, they discovered that war does not produce for them or for anyone else any sustainable solutions. I borrow this word "sustainable" from the common coinage of our day which we hear so

much in this Hall in speaking of "sustainable development" for poor countries like mine.

War has not brought anyone anything but destruction and bloodshed. However, as they saying goes in the Arab world, and in Yemen in particular, this seems to be the best that could have been done. The dialogue that is taking place now between the parties to the conflict and the tendency towards peace may achieve what has not been possible to achieve by military force, by high-sounding statements or even by fiery poetry.

My country supports dialogue, calls for peace and is on the side of peace. It follows with great interest the negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel and the agreements concluded between the two parties. We also follow closely the practical steps taken to achieve all that. We wish to thank and to express our appreciation for the efforts of the United States of America and the Russian Federation have deployed and continue to deploy in order to surmount obstacles, narrow the differences between the negotiators and thereby to promote peace and security in the region.

The peoples of the region have lived for far too long in the grip of instability and war. Now they long for the peace and stability they need so much. Yemen believes that if such is to be achieved, it has to be built on justice and not on force and *faits accomplis*. What has been achieved at both the Palestinian-Israeli and the Israeli-Jordanian tracks is not enough to ensure a durable peace in the region. To achieve such peace, it has to be based on the principle of the complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the occupied Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

While we hope that the Arab-Israeli peace process, which began in Madrid, will usher in a new era in a Middle East that is not threatened by nuclear weapons, we also hope that Israel will take an initiative in this respect that would demonstrate its desire to live in peace on the basis of respect for the rights of the Palestinian people and the acknowledgement of such rights, and not by intimidation, the demolishing of houses and the infliction of collective punishment.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) *(interpretation from French):* In order to indicate my delegation's position, I shall read out the following message that was communicated to the Secretary-General and signed by the Head of State of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Professor Rabbani:

> "On the occasion of the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, I should like to express the best wishes of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and all the Afghan people for the achievement of a solution to the Palestinian question based on full respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and their right to their own State. Such a solution requires that Israel withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Al Quds-Al Sharif, that is, Jerusalem."

Members of the Assembly have taken note of, and some have even studied, the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35). Let us remember that that Committee was established on 10 November 1975 and was requested to consider and make recommendations on a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the General Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

Present circumstances, and indeed the report itself, show quite clearly that that Committee has much more to do. Having said that, I do not need to repeat everything that has been stated here by several of my colleagues. The points that have been made are of major importance. I shall mention one of them: that an authority which agrees to end an occupation of a territory must, above all, put an end to the existence of settlements; one cannot at the same time maintain settlements and end a military occupation. The entire world must be reminded of this.

I should like to emphasize two points which perhaps need some clarification.

First, there is the question of Al Quds, that is, Jerusalem. Al Quds is indeed the capital of Palestine. The Palestinian people have the right to see their capital in Al Quds. That is one of their inalienable rights.

But it is more than that. What is involved here is the major importance of Haram Al-Sharif, in the city of Al-Quds, to all Muslims throughout the world. We must recognize that human rights include spiritual rights — the right of respect for what is sacred. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the forty-sixth anniversary of which we will commemorate in a few days, should make that point clear. It is a question of spiritual rights

and of the right of one spiritual community to the respect, by another spiritual community, of what it holds sacred.

For 14 centuries, up until 1948, Muslims respected the right of Jewish and Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, because Islam recognizes the sacred origin of Judaism and Christianity. Muslims have received God's command to tell the Jews and the Christians, "Your God is our God". The administration of Islam's places of pilgrimage must be in the hands of those who respect the three religions, that is to say, the Muslims.

In implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1968), Israel could end its occupation of Al-Quds, which would allow Muslims from around the world to make the pilgrimage freely and without hindrance from an occupying army — a pilgrimage to places that are very important in the Islamic religion.

The second point is Al-Khalil — Hebron — and the Mosque of Abraham. Mention was made here of the killing, on 25 February last, of Muslims who, before sunrise, were fasting and praying to the God of Abraham. The Security Council held several meetings on this question, and countries that are not members of the Council were able to express their views. Indeed, my delegation explained the meaning of the word "Al-Khalil" — that is, "intimate and privileged friend". That is what God called Abraham:

> "For God did take Abraham for a friend" *(The Holy Koran, IV:125)*.

In sura XXII of the Holy Koran, the last two verses tell us that God called upon all believers, not just the Arabs, to proclaim that Muslims belong to the religion of Abraham, that Abraham is spiritual father of all believers — Arab and non-Arab.

(spoke in Arabic)

> "it is the cult of your father Abraham." (The Holy Koran, XXII:78)

(spoke in French)

and that believers were called Muslims by Abraham himself, in the language of his time; the word "Muslim" means "those who submit to God". The Koran, in addressing believers, said that they must be witness to all of humankind on this point.

(spoke in Arabic)

> "Be witnesses for mankind." (The Holy Koran, ibid)

(spoke in French)

It is clear, therefore, that Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers: Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is also clear that ending the occupation of Hebron — Al-Khalil — would allow Muslim pilgrims from throughout the world, as well as Jewish and Christian pilgrims, to visit, without hindrance from an occupying army, those places of pilgrimage, as had been possible for 14 centuries.

To those who feel that my statement has not conformed to the usual United Nations style, and even to non-believers, I would say that the commitment of all Muslims world wide to Haram al-Sharif and to the Mosque of Abraham in Hebron is a cultural and political fact that is of universal scope.

Mr. Remírez de Estenoz Barciela (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The item, "Question of Palestine", has been under consideration by this Organization practically since its inception and it has permanently influenced our activities. Even if this year is no exception, we can congratulate ourselves that it has started to undergo a certain qualitative change as a result of the developments that have taken place after the signature, on 13 September 1993, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

This is a crucial time in the history of the Palestinian people. The process of rebuilding Palestinian society began with the agreements signed in May this year, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the presence of President Yasser Arafat in Gaza, developments which we welcome. However, much remains to be done in both the political and socio-economic areas.

From the political standpoint, it is essential to ensure, once and for all, universal recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to have their own State in their own territory, in exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination. It is also essential, therefore, that an end be put to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and that Israel fulfil expeditiously,

totally and comprehensively the provisions and meet the deadlines set out in the Declaration of Principles, in the Cairo Agreement and in all other documents agreed upon by both parties. The cause of peace in the Middle East allows for no procrastination in the fulfilment of agreements nor the creation of any obstacles to that end.

On the other hand, it is also fundamental to ensure the economic viability of Palestine and, consequently, the flow — through the United Nations or otherwise — of all committed financial and material resources necessary to reactivate an economy devastated by decades of war and occupation. We are certain that the sustained assistance of the international community aimed at helping the Palestinian economy flourish will be an important contribution to the achievement of peace and its consolidation, and that it will facilitate the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to sovereignty and independence.

The United Nations has a special political, legal and moral obligation in this process. Therefore, the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs dealing with the question of Palestine must continue to work towards eliminating those phenomena that still hinder the achievement of a just and lasting peace. In this context, it is particularly important to put an end to such serious developments as the continued proliferation of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, violence, repression and the constant violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. Israel must recognize the full applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories.

We also hope for the success of the ongoing negotiations for the holding of elections in Palestine, preceded by the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the occupied territories, as well as those for the expansion of Palestinian autonomy to other areas, especially the West Bank.

We must not forget that the question of Palestine is the core of the Middle East conflict. Hence, ensuring a climate of confidence conducive to a just peace in Palestine and to the exercise of all the rights of its people will be a most effective catalyst for the solution of the other components of that conflict. In this regard, we welcome the signing, on 26 October last, of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel. We hope that, sooner rather than later, Israel will withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan Height and from the territories it is today usurping in southern Lebanon. Doing so will contribute to the elimination of long-standing sources of tension and to peace, security and stability in the region as a whole.

Finally, allow me to express Cuba's full support for the statements made here by the Permanent Representatives of Senegal and Malta in their respective capacities as Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. That Committee, in which my delegation has the honour of participating and which has played an extremely important role in this whole process, now has an even more important function to fulfil. In our view, in addition to continuing to closely monitor compliance with the agreements, it should also throw itself into the task of finding ways and means to contribute to the channelling of international assistance from the most varied sources for the Palestinian people. In other words, it is now time to strengthen the Committee and enhance its capacity for action.

To sum up, it must be stressed that the solidarity traditionally offered by the United Nations to the just Palestinian cause has been one of the most important factors for today's progress towards a peace process that we hope will be irreversible. However, in our opinion, that solidarity is now more important than ever before. The Palestinian people wants the Organization to play a real and effective role in that process, and, for the sake of its own prestige and effectiveness, the United Nations needs to do so. Within its modest means, Cuba is prepared to continue contributing to the attainment of that laudable objective.

Mr. Karim (Bangladesh): My delegation would like to take this opportunity at the very outset to warmly congratulate Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé and other members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the extraordinary efforts they have made in the preparation and submission of the report (A/49/35) before the General Assembly.

During the course of last two decades the Committee, which was established by the General Assembly in resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, has worked ceaselessly to create and sharpen awareness of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a homeland of their own. The extraordinary to patronage that the Committee has received is testimony to the fact that the legitimate Palestinian cause enjoys widespread support among the members of the international community.

The United Nations has remained the most significant rallying point of support for the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Government and the people of Bangladesh have all along stood for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to all Middle East problems, including the Palestinian problem, on a basis of fairness and justice. We believe that implementation of the relevant resolutions of the various organs of the United Nations, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), can create a climate conducive to the peaceful and comprehensive solution of the Palestinian problem, as well as other problems in the Middle East.

During the course of the last 15 months we have witnessed a series of dramatic and positive breakthroughs in the Middle East. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements on 13 September 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel and the subsequent Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed on 4 May 1994, were the essential first steps towards ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence in the region. The return of Chairman Yasser Arafat to Gaza and Jericho and his assumption of the leadership of the Palestinian self-rule Authority marked the beginning of the march towards the realization of the cherished dream of an independent State. The signing at Erez in August 1994 of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities was yet another important step towards implementation of the Declaration of Principles. Bangladesh welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles and other subsequent agreements worked out between the Palestinian and the Israeli leadership.

None the less, my delegation is greatly concerned at the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands. The issue of dismantling the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied lands and the status of Jerusalem have yet to be addressed. In recent months there has been a growing number of incidents of violence unleashed on the Palestinians by the Israeli settlers, the worst and most heinous of which was the attack on the innocent worshippers at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in February of this year. These attacks have generated more violence, thereby threatening the entire peace process. There is an urgent need to understand, therefore, that continued violence could vitiate the climate of understanding that marked the transition towards peaceful coexistence. The continued incarceration of thousands of Palestinian prisoners is yet another obstacle to the peace process. Under the circumstances, we firmly believe that early implementation of the terms of the agreements could contribute towards easing the tension in the Palestinian self-rule area and other occupied territories.

It is universally recognized that the move to establish a lasting political structure in Palestine must be accompanied by economic, social and other measures to give the Palestinian entity viability. Prolonged Israeli occupation has taken a severe toll on the occupied areas in terms of economic degradation and infrastructural damage. It is heartening to note that the international community has demonstrated its willingness to overcome the difficulties faced by the Palestinian people and authorities. The appointment of Ambassador Terje Rod Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator by the Secretary-General to provide overall guidance and facilitate the effective coordination of international assistance to the Palestinian people in meeting their immediate and long-term needs has been a step in the right direction. We are optimistic that the regional Summit held recently in Casablanca will also generate adequate momentum for coordinating assistance to the Palestinian Authority as well as to other parts of the Middle East.

My delegation believes that progress in other areas of the peace process in the Middle East may generate more positive impulses for resolution of the Palestinian problem. We have therefore welcomed the historic Washington Declaration agreed upon by Jordan and Israel and the subsequent signing of the peace treaty between them on 26 October 1994. We are optimistic that the ongoing efforts to negotiate an understanding between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel will succeed in the near future.

My delegation remains strongly of the view that it is essential for the United Nations to remain seized of the Palestinian issue and to play a central role in the peace process. We welcome and deeply appreciate the Secretary-General's reaffirmation of the intention to keep the United Nations engaged in advancing the peace process with support by programmes of economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinian authorities and the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories.

We should like to conclude by reaffirming the total commitment and unequivocal support of the Government and people of Bangladesh for the inalienable rights of self-determination of the Palestinian people.

The President (*interpretation from French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369

(XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call upon the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I should like to thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on an issue of such extreme importance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). During my most recent address to this body a fortnight ago, I took the occasion to extend to Your Excellency our warmest congratulations on your election, which is indeed a tribute to your very well known personal qualities and vast experience, as well as to your country, Côte d'Ivoire. Allow me to reiterate once again my Organization's assurance that you can count on the full cooperation of the OIC in the fulfilment of your responsibilities.

The question of Palestine has been one of the issues that has received the undivided attention of the United Nations for almost half a century. This Assembly has before it today the last report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which it recalls once again in no uncertain terms the continuing ordeal of the Palestinians, as well as the new and very encouraging developments in the building of peace in the Middle East. Allow me to express our sincere appreciation to the Committee for its dedicated service under the able and dynamic leadership of Ambassador Cissé of Senegal.

We wish equally to commend the Secretary-General for his untiring efforts to find a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine under the auspices of the United Nations. We should also like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all the parties involved in the peace process since the convening of the Madrid Conference and before.

Ever since the launching of the Middle East peace process over three years ago, the OIC and its Secretary-General, Dr. Algabid, have affirmed their support of this process, which aims at achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the conflict in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the land-for-peace formula, as well as the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif remains at the forefront of the concerns of the OIC and its 51 member States. Last year, we witnessed a highly important positive development in the peace process — the signing on 13 September 1993 in Washington of a Declaration of Principles on procedures for self-rule in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel's recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

This year, amidst many remaining thorny issues, we also observe new positive developments in the Middle East following the implementation of the Cairo Agreement of 4 May on interim self-rule in the occupied Palestinian territories, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, and the assumption by the Palestinian National Authority of its responsibilities. The Palestinian people have begun the process of developing and reconstructing their national economy and institutions, and also of consolidating their national Authority on their land following the 29 April Israeli-Palestinian economic Protocol. These positive developments constitute an important step towards transferring all powers in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Palestinian national Authority.

Here, I should like to laud the wise leadership of the Palestinian people and the courageous decision taken by President Yasser Arafat, which we deem a big step on the road to achieving a comprehensive and just settlement and ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people.

While welcoming such positive developments, which it considered to be serious steps towards realizing a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East that will enable the Palestinian people to recover their inalienable national rights and will return the occupied territories to their legitimate owners; and while expressing its support of the peace process in the Middle East aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Organization of the Islamic Conference affirms its commitment to the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the first Qibla of Islam, with all that it stands for in the eyes of the Islamic Ummah, such as religious, historical and ideological values, and the necessity of restoring the city to Palestinian sovereignty. It also affirms that a just and comprehensive peace can be achieved only with a full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and with the restoration of the inalienable legitimate national and political rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to return, to self-determination and to establish their independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The OIC also reaffirms its commitment to the issue of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which, being part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, is the Organization's prime cause, and to the necessity of its restoration to Palestinian sovereignty as capital of the State of Palestine as a guarantee of peace and security in the region.

Moreover, at this stage the States members of the OIC would like to see positive developments on the political side reflected in the situation in the occupied territories through termination of the process of settlement and the acts of repression and inhuman practices and procedures to which the Palestinian people in these territories are being subjected. They would also like to see an end put to the continuous violations of the Islamic holy places, of which the partition of the Ibrahimi Holy Mosque in the city of Hebron is a recent example. These steps are necessary to the rebuilding of trust and confidence.

We should also like to note here our support for the other agreements reached within the framework of the peace process — especially the Peace Treaty between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel, which was signed lately. Now that the era of peace has come to the Middle East, the international community is requested to affirm its solidarity with the Palestinian people and to provide them with all kinds of political and economic support in their struggle to regain their inalienable political rights and to establish the long-sought just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

In this context, the OIC's annual coordination meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which was held in New York on 3 October 1994, welcomed all these positive developments in the Middle East peace process and reaffirmed the need to make progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks with a view to arriving at a just, comprehensive and final settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace — a settlement that would guarantee full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories.

The meeting also reiterated the need to adhere to all United Nations resolutions calling for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the need to put an end to Israeli occupation of and settlements on Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as the occupied Lebanese territories.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of the role of the United Nations in the peace process and expressed appreciation for the work of the United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territories. It invited these agencies to intensify their assistance to the Palestinian people to enable them to rebuild their economy and institutions. It also reaffirmed that Al-Quds Al-Sharif, with its national and religious significance, remains a fundamental issue for all Islamic States — one that can be neither ignored nor forgotten — and that the restoration of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to Palestinian and Islamic sovereignty is necessary.

We look forward to the implementation of the agreement between the PLO and Israel proceeding without any delay whatsoever and unhindered, as planned. I refer in particular to Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and to the holding of free elections at the earliest possible date.

We also see the necessity of a major role for the United Nations and its organs, especially United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in the peace process. We believe, too, that the United Nations should shoulder its entire responsibility in all fields for realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, implementation of the relevant international resolutions and the provision of support for the peace process as well as for the agreement concluded between the parties concerned as a means of guaranteeing and executing such arrangements.

In this connection, the OIC calls on the international community to increase its support for the activities of UNRWA to enable it to carry out its mandate effectively. At the same time, we should like to urge that all Member States comply fully with all the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization pertaining to the question of Palestine and the situation in the occupied territories.

The Palestinian people have suffered long years of occupation, repression and denial of the opportunity to exercise their national rights. Now that a new dawn has broken in the Middle East and the time has come to reap the fruits of the Palestinian struggle, the international community is called upon, especially on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is being celebrated today, to affirm this

solidarity and to extend all forms of support to these people until they are able to live in freedom and dignity in the land of their fathers and forefathers. to have their inalienable rights restored and to establish their independent State.

The establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires that the efforts of the international community be united and that its energies be mobilized to ensure security and peace in the region. These steps would constitute major support for international peace and security, which may be realized through the consolidation of Palestinian authority over all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the extension of all types of support to the Palestinian people.

It is incumbent on all of us, during this crucial period, to continue to extend all types of assistance to the PLO to enable it to confront the coming phase and establish its authority and national institutions. This requires that the international community provide the Palestinian people with support in the economic and material spheres and in all other fields until they complete the process of reconstructing their national economy and rebuilding the infrastructure.

In conclusion I should like, on this occasion, on behalf of the OIC, to applaud the glorious Palestinian people, while affirming the Islamic Ummah's solidarity with them in their just and legitimate struggle under their legitimate and sole representative — the Palestine Liberation Organization — until they are able to restore their inalienable national rights, including their right to return to self-determination and establish their independent Palestinian State on their national soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Three years ago, on a similar occasion, I said from this rostrum that the Organization of the Islamic Conference yearned for the day when the flag of Palestine would be unfurled over its own territory and would wave proudly here also, amidst those of the other Members of the United Nations, and that when that day came Israel too would be able to enjoy the sweet taste of recognition and cherish the blessings of peace. Well, that day, I believe, is not now far away.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform Members that the Assembly will consider draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 40 at a later date, which will be announced in the *Journal*.

Agenda item 38

The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General (A/49/556, A/49/636)

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on item 38 be closed in half an hour. If I hear no objection it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) *(interpretation from French)*: It is now a little more than one year since, on 13 September 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel committed the Middle East region to a decisive turning-point in its history: on that date, after mutually recognizing each other, they signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes, and the Memorandum of Agreement thereto.

Major progress realized throughout this year in implementing the provisions of this basic Agreement, in particular the provisions relating to the transition period, have, despite numerous stumbling-blocks and snares, contributed to gradually giving shape to the process courageously embarked upon by the Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

It is in this context that we must place the signing in Cairo, on 4 May 1994, of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, and also the signing of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, which took place at Erez on 29 August 1994.

The results of these two Agreements represent notable progress, marking the beginning of Palestinian autonomy in the relevant zones of the occupied Palestinian territory. They reflect also the will of the parties concerned to advance firmly towards a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Palestine question on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In this respect the many incidents that, unfortunately, have marked the course of events in recent months, demonstrate — if ever there was a need to do so — the importance, in this period of complex and delicate transition, of showing our unfailing support for the leaders of the region who chose the difficult road of peace. We must especially translate that support into concrete acts that would, for the immense majority of the populations in the region who desire peace, restore the hope of a better tomorrow.

With regard to the Palestinian populations in the occupied territories in particular, whose commitment, support and participation are indispensable to the success of the peace process, the support of the international community to meet the multiple humanitarian needs and promote development is becoming more crucial today than ever because it, determines to a large degree, the capacity of those populations to resist the temptation of extremism.

In this delicate phase of peace-building, the greatest threat to peace lies in the continuing deterioration of the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the scourges of poverty, unemployment and the breakdown of infrastructures that foment despair and violence.

That is why we believe that the United Nations should become deeply involved in the peace process and in the establishment and consolidation of the nascent Palestinian Authority. In this regard, we welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Coordinator and the convening of an inter-organization meeting which brought together the representatives of 17 institutions and programmes of the United Nations in order to adopt an integrated and coherent approach to supporting the economic and social development of the region.

Given the enormity of the tasks in all areas and the need rapidly to achieve the total implementation of the Washington Declaration, the United Nations efforts must be sustained and accompanied immediately by the unblocking of funds promised by the donor countries in Washington on 1 October 1993 to finance various projects in the period from 1994 to 1998.

During this complex and delicate transitional period it is also important — as was emphasized by His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, in his message on 29 November 1994 to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — that we reaffirm that it is the responsibility of the United Nations to remain permanently involved until all aspects of the question of Palestine are settled on the basis of the principles laid down by the United Nations in its relevant resolutions. These include: the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories; respect for the rights of all States of the region to live in peace within safe and internationally recognized borders; and the recognition and exercise of the national and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination.

The emphasis put on the "Question of Palestine" is the result of the unanimously shared conviction that this question is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that only its global, just and lasting settlement will lay the basis for true peace in the Middle East.

From this point of view, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have already begun to show their fundamental importance by instilling a dynamism in the region which led to the signing, on 25 July 1994, of the peace treaty between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

We hope that the Israeli-Lebanese and the Israeli-Syrian negotiations will quickly lead to results which will consolidate the basis for peace in the Middle East. The road ahead is long and full of traps but the establishment of a just and lasting peace is no longer a pipe dream. We owe this to the courage and wisdom of the region's leaders, for whom the awarding of the Nobel Prize is recognition of their shared efforts.

It is up to us to help them breathe life into this much desired peace for the benefit of all the peoples of the region and to achieve the grand design of definitive peace.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Middle East region is currently witnessing the beginning of a new era in the contemporary history of a region that has known many wars and conflicts in the recent past. The peace process which started at the Madrid Conference three years ago and led to mutual recognition and the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel, was followed by several agreements and steps which were taken by both sides to implement the Declaration. Also a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel was signed in October 1994.

Although these positive developments have not resulted yet on the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region, any observer of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot but recognize the magnitude of the historical achievements that have been made over the past few years. The greatest of those achievements was, undoubtedly, the agreement by all parties that the objective of the negotiations is the full implementation of the terms of reference of the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) in their real content which stipulates the establishment of comprehensive peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours in return for the withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of all its legitimate national rights.

Direct negotiations immediately followed and led to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from some occupied Palestinian territories. Last year, progress continued to be made by the parties negotiating with varying degrees of success between the various tracks. Despite the difficulties that face the negotiation process, and the fact that extremists are trying to thwart it, it continues.

Mr. Seniloli (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We cannot delude ourselves with the belief that continued progress in the peace process will take place automatically or that it is inevitable. We believe that all the parties concerned should give added momentum to the negotiations since the widespread support the peace process has elicited so far stemmed from the increasing expectation that the peace process will lead to restoring all lands and rights in full, to putting an end to the shedding of innocent blood, to initiating regional cooperation on arms control and development of the economies of the countries of the region in order to raise the living standards of their peoples and alleviate the suffering of those who have been exhausted by the burden of continued occupation. Undoubtedly, every day that passes without tangible progress that brings us closer to the realization of these expectations will lead to more extremism and violence.

We believe that the attainment of comprehensive peace requires imminent progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, that would ensure full restoration of Syria's sovereignty over all its occupied territories in the Golan and ensure the full and sincere implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on Southern Lebanon.

Peace is indivisible. If all parties are sincere in their desire for peace and their intentions are genuine, the peoples of the region will be prepared to make any sacrifices that may be necessary to achieve comprehensive peace.

When Egypt initiated the experiment of peace, it did so in very difficult circumstances indeed and had to make many sacrifices. However, this did not deter us from pursuing the peace option. Today, the provisions of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, which constitute the sound interpretation of the equation of 'comprehensive peace in return for all the land taken by force' stand-out as a towering monument and an example to be followed. We in Egypt are rightfully proud of this pioneering experiment without which, the current peace process could never have begun and could never have succeeded.

Egypt continues to deploy every possible effort in support of the peace negotiations. We are now hosting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. At the same time, we urge Israel and all the other parties to achieve similar progress on the other negotiating tracks. We are also active participants in the multilateral negotiations on regional cooperation in the Middle East, which could provide a strong incentive for all parties to make progress in bilateral negotiations with a view to promoting the desired regional cooperation.

The multilateral negotiations are very important, because they foreshadow the nature of future relations in the region. Egypt hopes they will contribute to achieving the objective my country has often advocated here in the General Assembly and outside the United Nations: namely, the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Egypt has also called repeatedly for renouncing hegemony designs, doctrines of military superiority and the occupation of territory as a means of ensuring security. We have also stressed that a comprehensive peace is the sole genuine guarantee of the security of all parties.

The possession of nuclear weapons by a Middle Eastern country is a spectre that threatens the security and stability of the entire region and increases the possibility of the proliferation of such weapons to other countries in the region. Therefore, Egypt calls upon Israel to enter into serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament, to agree to place its nuclear installations

under international safeguards, and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As Israel has not yet agreed to begin negotiations on nuclear-arms control in the context of the multilateral arms-control task force, we hope that Israel will quickly take practical tangible steps to build confidence in this field. The NPT review conference scheduled for next year will be a true test of the Treaty's credibility and universality.

We in Egypt hope that it will soon be possible to look upon United Nations documents on the Middle East conflict as mere historical reference material. We hope they will constitute an unambiguous record of unswerving devotion to the principles that regulate the settlement of disputes, particularly with respect to issues on which negotiations have not yet started and which, we hope, will be negotiated soon: namely the issues of Al Quds, refugees and the settlements. We call upon the General Assembly to continue to support the firm principles upon which a comprehensive, just settlement of the conflict in the Middle East should be founded.

We in Egypt believe that such a settlement will create a new reality in the Middle East, one that will usher in an era of stability, prosperity and fruitful cooperation which will benefit all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Al-Suwaidi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased to address the Assembly on behalf of the United Arab Emirates on agenda item 38, "The situation in the Middle East". I wish at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his commendable efforts to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East region.

The international community has been unanimous in welcoming the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the PLO, in the Washington Declaration ending the state of belligerency between Israel and Jordan, and in a variety of other agreements, bilateral talks and other measures. All of this constitutes a first step towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of international legality as represented by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

While my country has welcomed the convening of the Madrid Conference and the beginning of bilateral talks, and has been taking part in multilateral discussions, it has reiterated in the statement of its Foreign Minister in this Hall, the importance it attaches to achieving constructive results in the talks between Israel on the one hand and Syria and Lebanon on the other, which have not yet succeeded owing to Israel's failure to honour its commitments under the principles of the Middle East peace process, which are based on the land-for-peace principle and on complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the holy city of Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, in compliance with international resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The entire international community has long held that the question of Palestine is at the very core of the Middle East conflict.

This means that the two questions are intertwined and interrelated and cannot be separated one from the other. In the light of this fact, it is clear that in order for the peace process to move forward towards a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to this conflict, it is necessary for the international community to continue to deploy more efforts to push for peace and eliminate all the obstacles and difficulties that obstruct the road to peace.

It goes without saying that among the *sine qua non* conditions to see success crown the efforts made in the Middle East, it is necessary to strive to achieve an environment of trust and ensure that the political will exists among all the negotiating parties to work for peace. This cannot be achieved in the absence of any evidence that Israel credibly intends to honour the commitments it took upon itself at the Madrid Conference. It goes without saying that the steps taken towards peace thus far are but the beginning of a very lengthy road full of political, economic and security hurdles.

In order for the progress achieved in the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to lead to success, Israel must honour all the commitments it has taken upon itself because peace-building needs the achievement of concrete results regarding the main issues involved in the Middle East situation and the question of Palestine. Foremost among those issues are the questions of the holy city of Al-Quds, of the settlements, of the return of refugees to their homes, of the restoration of Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and of the full sovereignty of Lebanon over all its territory.

Consequently, Israel should demonstrate its peaceful intentions by making it possible to solve all pending questions in accordance with the principles of the Charter, the resolutions of international legality and the norms of international law.

We hope that the bilateral and multilateral negotiations will lead to the creation of a new political climate marked by a desire to engage in dialogue in resolving disputes and conflicts and that such climate will promote peace, security and development at the regional and the international levels alike.

In conclusion, may I reaffirm the importance we attach to the performance by the United Nations and its specialized agencies which have been seized of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East for a long time of their role in pushing the on-going peace process forward in all its developmental, political, economic and social aspects in order to achieve peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Such peace must be based on justice, equality and respect for human rights so that the peoples of the region may live in peace and security and thereby achieve progress and prosperity.

We hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolutions before it because of the great political importance of these resolutions which embody a significant political mechanism that is essential to the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement in the region.

Mr. Yacobi (Israel): Far-reaching changes are reshaping the Middle East. The speed and extent of this transformation are unmatched in the world today.

Israel and its neighbours have established relations through various tracks of the peace process: with the Palestinians, with Jordan, and with States of the Persian Gulf and North Africa. The multilateral negotiations are bearing fruit as a framework for regional cooperation. We continue to look forward to progress with Syria and Lebanon.

In one short year, the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993 by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has turned from concept to dynamic reality. On 4 May 1994, the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area was signed by the parties in Cairo. It began the implementation on the ground of the Declaration of Principles. On 13 May 1994, the Israel Defence Forces withdrew from Jericho. Five days later, on 18 May 1994, they completed their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Police immediately assumed responsibility for the security of Palestinians in these areas. Three months later, on 29 August 1994, we signed the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities. This early empowerment agreement transfers from the Israeli military government and its civil administration to the Palestinian Authority powers and responsibilities in five spheres: education, welfare, tourism, health and direct taxation.

Jordan and Israel successfully completed the process begun in Madrid. A step towards this end was taken on 25 July 1994, with the signing of the Washington Declaration. This agreement ended the state of war between the two countries. It was soon followed by one of the crowning achievements of the peace process: the treaty of peace signed on the Israeli-Jordanian border on 26 October 1994.

Progress towards peace and cooperation has also been made in relations between Israel and other Arab States. On 1 September 1994, Israel and Morocco signed an agreement to open liaison offices in each other's country. On 3 October 1994, Israel and Tunisia agreed to exchange liaison officers. The Gulf States further paved the way for regional economic cooperation by declaring an end to the secondary and tertiary Arab boycott.

The Economic Summit that recently convened in Casablanca, Morocco, reflected the desire of countries in the region to establish economic cooperation. There was consensus among the conference participants that boycotts are incompatible with this goal. As was stated in the Casablanca Declaration:

> "The participants ... explored how best to accelerate the development of the region and overcome, as soon as possible, obstacles, including boycotts and all barriers to trade and investment. All agreed that there is a need to promote increased investment from inside and outside the region. They noted that such investment requires free movement of goods, capital and labour across the borders ... In this context, the participants noted favourably the decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council regarding the lifting of the secondary and tertiary aspects of the boycott of Israel." (*A/49/645, para. 6*)

The boycott is an obsolete economic weapon whose main casualty is regional prosperity, and we hope to see it abolished soon in its entirety.

The Casablanca conference ensured that both the public and the private sectors would have a voice in shaping new economic arrangements for the region. Representatives of 60 Governments and the Palestinian Authority participated in this summit. They were joined by over 1,100 business leaders from around the world, including hundreds of Israelis and Arabs. The Casablanca conference broke down walls of mistrust. In their place it cemented the foundations of economic cooperation in the Middle East. Arab, Israeli and other businessmen met each other face to face. They exchanged ideas and discussed proposals.

All these developments represent a dramatic turning-point for the Middle East, for the relations between Israel and its neighbours and for the creation of a better future which all people in the region can enjoy.

We are witnessing important steps towards peace. But, at the same time, we see an opposing trend towards radicalization and violence. It imperils the entire region. Today we witnessed yet another act of terrorism against innocent Israeli citizens. A terrorist affiliated with Hamas and armed with an axe brutally murdered a young woman in northern Israel several hours ago. Liat Gabai died of her wounds on the way to the hospital. She was 19 years old.

Radical fundamentalist organizations threaten the stability of Governments and States, terrorizing innocents without distinction. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah have raised the cry of "jihad", or holy war, against all so-called infidels. They, together with similar organizations, are active in every corner of the Middle East and beyond: in Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, in the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority, in Israel, and even in Argentina, the United Kingdom and the United States. Their primary goal is to establish a radical religious empire, in their own words "from the Atlantic Ocean to China."

In the meantime, they focus on the elimination of peace. For this, they enlist financial support from backers in the United States, Europe and other places, but they rely primarily upon Iran. Yet, even though this fact is well known, many countries still maintain elaborate ties with the Iranian regime, including selling it arms and other military equipment and giving it technological, economic and financial assistance.

Will the region move towards peace and cooperation, as the peacemakers desire? Or will it be drawn backward into the shadows of conflict and bloodshed, as promised by the radical fundamentalists? Political agreements are the first steps towards ensuring peace. Then, all peoples of the region must be able to enjoy the great social and economic potential it offers.

A peaceful environment will enable all countries in the Middle East to divert their human energies and economic resources away from conflict and towards social and economic development. The combined cost of defence in our region is about $70 billion annually. Of this, it is estimated that $30 billion could be saved each year — if there were peace. This money could then be invested in education, health, human progress, science, technology and more — if there were peace. The result would be a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for all peoples.

I believe that there is no other solution but genuine cooperation in our region. Partnerships in the fields of health and technology, joint ventures in industrial and resource development — these are just two of the possibilities which peace can make a reality. Eventually, regional cooperation could pave the way for a Middle East common market.

The dream of regional cooperation is steadily becoming a reality. Having signed a peace treaty with Jordan, we are now seeking to bring the benefits of peace to both peoples. We are working with Jordan to find ways of jointly developing shared resources. The opportunities are enormous: exploitation of mineral resources in the Dead Sea, agricultural development in the Arava valley, and integration of infrastructures in the sister cities of Aqaba and Eilat, which meet on the Red Sea. As a first step, we have begun work on linking electricity grids in certain areas, saving money and increasing efficiency.

Israel and Jordan have also agreed to establish an Eilat-Aqaba free tourism zone. The area lends itself to joint development of the sites, blending the arid desert climate with water-based recreational facilities and the natural wonders of the Gulf of Aqaba. Development of the region for tourism could serve as a basis for cooperation between Israel, Jordan, Egypt and, eventually, Saudi Arabia and, of course, the Palestinian Authority. The inspiring contrast of red desert mountains, pale blue skies and indigo waters could make the Red Sea riviera a favourite escape for vacationers from around the world.

In Eilat and Aqaba, Israel and Jordan are also exploring the creation of a free-trade zone, based on the principle of the free flow of goods between countries. Such a free-trade zone could eventually be expanded to include all of Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and nearby countries.

Progress is also being made in the multilateral negotiations. These talks bring together Israel and many other countries in the Middle East to encourage regional cooperation in five fields: environmental protection, development of water resources, economic cooperation, arms control and regional security, and refugees.

The road before us is long, but our destination is clear: peace and reconciliation, cooperation and prosperity. This is the key to a better future for the people of the Middle East. It is not only the key to ending the suffering and loss of human life, but also the key to a new hope in the hearts of all.

Now is the time to resolve the plight of the four Israeli soldiers who remain missing in action: Tzvi Feldman, Zachariah Baumel, Yehuda Katz and Ron Arad. We call upon those countries and organizations holding them to abide by international law and to display humanitarian sensitivity in order to prevent further suffering by the soldiers and their families.

The international community bears a solemn responsibility: to assist in bringing about this profound change. It can do this by supporting the States and parties that are turning towards the future and by stopping those that would destroy the great opportunity that has opened before us. This is a historic opportunity and a momentous challenge. May we all rise to the occasion.

Mr. Abdul Momin (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of my delegation, may I first congratulate all those whose courage and vision are responsible for the positive developments in the Middle East. The past few years have seen a welcome change in the relations between the Arabs and the Israelis. This can be regarded as part of the peace dividend resulting from the end of the cold war.

We compliment those responsible for the peace process, from its beginning at the Madrid Peace Conference to the diplomacy required to achieve the latest successes. We have now seen the historic signing of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. This is an important turning-point in the relationship between the two countries. It is a most welcome demonstration of the willingness of all parties to cooperate.

At the same time, there have been moves which have opened up the possibility of reaching a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian problem. The peace process has so far led to Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho. We hope that Palestinian authority will be extended to more areas in the West Bank. Before this can be achieved, however, the Palestinians will face the difficult tasks of economic reconstruction and social development. More than ever, they need international assistance and we hope that this will be forthcoming. We are nevertheless confident that they will ultimately succeed in building an independent State of Palestine.

However, there may still be a long and difficult way ahead before an eventual comprehensive settlement of all Middle East problems is secured. In this respect, we are pleased that the next stage towards achieving such comprehensive peace is under way. It is good to see that negotiations are taking place between Syria and Israel, and we would like to see similar talks between Lebanon and Israel. We fully support Syria's efforts to seek a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights. In terms of a settlement of the Lebanon issues, the Government and the people of Brunei Darussalam wish to see an agreement leading to a full Israeli withdrawal from the buffer zone that it occupies in south Lebanon.

The peace process must continue if a just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem is to be reached. We encourage all parties concerned to take the opportunity that the prevailing international climate offers.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The establishment and maintenance of peace in the Middle East are of paramount importance to all the countries of the world because of their implications for all other regions. The Middle East is one of the world's most sensitive regions, in addition to its importance and the effect it has on international peace and security. In order for peace and security to reign in the region, the international community must find a peaceful, just, equitable and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Bahrain wishes to reiterate the firm belief that it will never be possible to achieve any just and peaceful settlement to the conflict in the region so long as the solution is piecemeal and incomplete. This has been

stressed by His Excellency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, in his statement to the General Assembly on 6 October, in which he stated:

> "The peace process should be comprehensive and integrated, for it would be futile to focus on achieving peace and development in one part of the region while leaving unresolved problems of others." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 20th meeting, p. 6)*

Therefore, it is necessary, in the interests of a comprehensive and just settlement in the region, that equal attention be paid to all the tracks that lead to such settlement. In this respect, we call upon Israel to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) which call for withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In seeking a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, my delegation underscores the fact that as the question of Palestine is at the core of the conflict in the region, it is essential that any peaceful settlement should be coupled with an integral approach that focuses on enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

Bahrain's welcome for the Madrid Peace Conference and its hosting of the sixth round of the Multilateral Working Group on the Environment on 25 and 26 October, stemmed from its conviction that the peace process in the Middle East must be supported if a just and comprehensive solution to all the problems of the region is to be found. Furthermore, Bahrain considered the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Washington, D.C. on 13 September 1993 a first step towards a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. In this respect, I wish to make it clear that the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is a quintessential principle that must be taken fully into account in the peace negotiations, if they are to lead ultimately to a peace that secures the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish its national independent State.

Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles, developments have followed on the heels of another. There has been the signing of the self-rule Agreement in Cairo on 4 May 1994, the entry of the Palestinian Authority into the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the signing by Jordan and Israel on 25 July of the Washington Declaration and, later, of the peace treaty between the two countries on 26 October 1994. For all this, we have not noticed any real progress in the negotiations on the Syrian track. Any solution to be reached on this track must include full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and the dismantling of the settlements in compliance with the resolutions of international legality. In this respect, my delegation wishes to declare its support for the position of the Syrian Arab Republic in demanding the return of its full sovereignty over its territories occupied since 1967 in the Golan.

On the other hand, parts of the territory of Lebanon are still under Israeli occupation. While confirming our commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon within internationally recognized borders, we call upon Israel to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on the unconditional withdrawal of its troops from the Lebanese territory.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is of paramount importance to us because of its serious implications for the security and stability of the region. The continuing nuclear programmes of Israel without any international control do not serve the cause of peace and security in the Middle East. Therefore, my delegation maintains that it is necessary for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This is an essential prerequisite of the confidence-building that is one of the cornerstones of the peace process, and the means of serving the interests of our present and future generations.

If the peace process in the Middle East is brought to fruition in the form of a just and comprehensive peace on all tracks, it will contribute to ending a political conflict that has lasted for far too long, with all the wars and confrontations it has spawned. Therefore stability in the area has always been the aspiration of all the region's people, provided it was founded on justice. Stability, however, is not an end in itself; rather, it is a bridge to the economic and social development that the peoples of the region seek so that they may invest their resources in progress and prosperity.

Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia) *(interpretation from Arabic):* The General Assembly considers the question of the Middle East today at an important juncture in the history of the region. The peace process that was begun in Madrid has led to agreements between the PLO and Israel, a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-

Government Arrangements, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, the creation of the Palestinian Authority in that area and the conclusion of an Agreement between Jordan and Israel.

The developments in the Middle East constitute a new beginning in the efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive all-embracing solution to the conflict that has racked the region for far too long. These unprecedented developments which, in the past, were considered impossible, have been made possible by the international situation that took shape after the end of the cold war.

The Government of Saudi Arabia is intent on playing its full role on the international scene with a view to helping create the circumstances that will lead us all to the peace, liberty and security to which we all aspire after. The foundations of our current world order acquire their legality and authority from the same principles and ideals that inspired the United Nations Charter and the concepts and resolutions of international legality. Therefore, the peace process that began in Madrid in 1991 on the basis of the two relevant Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), must continue on the basis of these two resolutions and ensure the transfer of competence to the Palestinian authorities in the remainder of the West Bank of the Palestinian territory and must lead also to significant progress in the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

The question of the occupied Arab Syrian Golan is clear enough and is governed by the principle of respect for international borders. Moreover, security cannot be achieved by the acquisition of land by force but, rather, by laying the foundations of peace. And those foundations will not exist unless Israel withdraws completely from the occupied Syrian Golan. As for Southern Lebanon, this is an issue that is governed by Security Council 452 (1978) which clearly stipulates total, immediate and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Lebanese territory. Consequently, we demand immediate and unconditional implementation of the provisions of this resolution.

The question of the Holy City of Al-Quds, the first of the two Qiblas and the third holy site of Islam, represents the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Consequently, we must affirm that no lasting peace could be achieved in the Middle East without a just solution to this question on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 252 (1968). Therefore, Israel must not make any demographic changes that may alter the characteristics of the Holy City or affect future negotiations on its permanent status.

My country attaches importance to the multilateral negotiations in the context of the peace process that began in Madrid and considers that they complement bilateral negotiations but are not a substitute for them. My country hopes that the negotiations on arms control will lead to the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East and rid the region of all weapons of mass destruction. In the context of comprehensive peace the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear weapons would pose a threat to the future of the whole region. Therefore, Israel must enter into serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament; accept to place its nuclear facilities under the international safeguards regime and accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has called for the renunciation of hegemonistic concepts, of military superiority postures and of the occupation of lands as a means of guaranteeing security. We have affirmed that comprehensive peace is the true guarantor of the safety and security of all parties.

We welcome the willingness of the United Nations to play a much larger role in the provision of assistance in various social and economic fields in the Middle East. The Organization's contribution is indispensable if peace is to be built in the entire region. We welcome also the appointment of Ambassador Larsen of Norway as the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. We consider that the measures adopted by the United Nations are positive and conducive to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We are convinced that the peace process must go hand in hand with measures that will build the confidence between the peoples of the region. We look forward to the adoption by the international community and, in particular, by the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, of step that will ensure the success of the peace process that began in Madrid on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) so that we may usher in an era of tranquility, stability, prosperity and progress in the Middle East.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): The political topography of the Middle East has continued to change following the historic September 1993 PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Less than five weeks ago, Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty, giving rise to hopes for progress in the

Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks of the peace process. These are significant and welcome developments, given the history of violence and warfare that has characterized the Arab-Israeli conflict in our times.

Malaysia, like the other Members of the United Nations, is pleased with the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of its tasks in the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area, under the leadership of Mr. Yasser Arafat. We view this as a first step towards the full realization of a just and comprehensive settlement leading to the withdrawal of Israel from Al-Quds Al-Sharif and all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories. United Nations resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), provide the framework and basis for a just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The PLO-Israel and Jordan-Israel agreements demonstrate that peace is no longer elusive in the region. It is too early, however, to conclude that the peace process is irreversible. Peace remains fragile, confronted by various challenges and pitfalls. There are many distractions and detractors to the peace process. Peace must be nurtured by the leaders and people in the region, together with the active and tangible support and involvement of the international community. Peace and the fruits of peace are long awaited benedictions for the people of the Middle East, Arabs and Jews. Like other regions in the world, peace in the Middle East must mean the flowering of development, full expression of the rights and empowerment of the people and commitments to equity and social justice.

Since Israel is still occupying Arab lands, it has an important responsibility. Israel must not be seen as compounding the difficulties of the Palestinians and those under Israeli occupation. The Israeli Government must show its sincerity in the implementation of the peace accord and not be distracted nor diverted by extremists mounting challenges to the peace process. The difficult questions, as yet unresolved, must be addressed, including the question of Jerusalem and illegal settlers in Arab lands.

While welcoming progress towards peace in the Middle East, my delegation remains concerned over the various acts of violence perpetrated in the occupied territories which have led to many casualties among the civilians. This situation, if allowed to continue, could set back the peace process. It is imperative that every effort be made to avoid the occurrence of acts of violence in the occupied territories, as well as other parts of the region. In this regard, my delegation is pleased to note that the presence of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) have to a certain extent contributed to stability in the region. It is also important that all parties to the conflict exercise restraint and display a firm commitment to the overall objective of peace so as not to aggravate the situation and delay the implementation of the peace agreements.

Real and lasting peace is more than just the absence of war. Peace is meaningless if there is still hunger and starvation among the population. For peace to endure, the basic needs of the population would have to be urgently addressed.

The various initiatives taken by the Secretary-General to enhance economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people is commendable. We welcome the assurances given by the Secretary-General that he

> "will also make every effort to ensure that the United Nations system contributes its utmost in the fields of economic and social development, which will be essential in building peace throughout the region" *(A/49/636, para. 8)*.

Certainly, all these programmes and projects cannot be implemented without adequate financial resources. The Conference to Support Middle East Peace held in Washington on 1 October last year pledged some $2.4 billion in economic assistance to the occupied territories for the five-year transition period from 1994 to 1999. Despite all those promises and pledges made, it is indeed disappointing to note that only a fraction has so far been delivered. Surely, this situation cannot be tolerated as it undermines the courageous decisions taken by the Arab and Israeli leaders. Whatever the explanation for the delay, at this crucial stage, the donor countries have to be more responsive to the urgent need for the rapid delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. The leadership and statesmanship displayed by the leaders in the region deserves every support and encouragement from the international community.

Malaysia will continue to render its support to the Palestinians in their efforts to reconstruct their land and to build a democratic society. Malaysia has consistently voiced its support for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict, one that would bring lasting peace and stability to all the countries in the region, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Consistent with our support for the peace process, Malaysia was represented by our Foreign Minister at the Economic Summit for the Middle East and North Africa held recently in Casablanca. The convening of such a Summit was timely and broke new ground, thus deserving our appreciation. The Summit for the first time managed to bring Governments and business leaders from Israel and the Arab world together. In this regard, my delegation wishes to reaffirm our support to the contents of the Casablanca Declaration which among others, emphasized the role of the business community in the peace process. We feel that the business sector too has a major, if not a pivotal, role to play in the Middle East peace efforts by participating directly in the reconstruction and in the promotion of trade and investment of the countries in that region. In order for the Palestinians to build a viable economy with the cooperation of the neighbouring countries, it is important that the borders of the Palestinian territories be kept open for labour, tourism and trade. The next economic summit, which should take place in the first half of next year in Jordan, will again provide another opportunity to further strengthen the partnership of business and Governments in the promotion of peace and stability in the Middle East.

It is our earnest hope that peace can be permanently anchored in the region. No longer should the Middle East conflict be viewed as a threat to international peace and security. Like the positive developments that we continue to witness in other parts of the world, the Middle East should play its historical role as an international nexus for commerce and trade, civilization and culture, helping to build a world released from hate and antagonism, eschewing political and cultural divisions.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): In a situation marked by fluidity, as in the Middle East over the past year, it can be said that the only thing that is certain is change itself. Indeed, the period since our last consideration of this agenda item has been conspicuous by the remarkable political and strategic transformation which has taken place in the Middle East.

Without doubt, the epicentre of this process of change and transition has been the transformation in the relations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel. The signing just over a year ago of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel paved the way for a number of agreements between the two parties, most notably the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area to implement the Declaration.

The accelerating pace of peacemaking since the signing of that Declaration is undeniable testimony to its historic significance; long-existing barriers militating against peace have indeed been broken. Change, however, has not been limited to the formal act of treaty-making. President Yasser Arafat made a historic return to the Gaza Strip and Jericho after many years in exile to lead the Palestinian Authority, which, as a result of the agreement reached in August 1994, will gradually extend its jurisdiction to the rest of the West Bank in a number of important areas.

The transformation in relations between the PLO and Israel has spread in the overall context of the Middle East to relations between Jordan and Israel. Over the last 12 months we have indeed witnessed tremendous strides on the Jordan-Israel negotiating track, which culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994.

While these developments justify the hopes and optimism that accompanied the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles, Indonesia is also fully cognizant of the formidable challenges that still lie ahead. With respect to the PLO-Israel negotiating track, my delegation has on many occasions identified the urgent need for concerted efforts by the international community to come immediately to the assistance of the Palestinian Authority as it embarks on the reconstruction and redevelopment of the occupied territories, for tangible improvements in Palestinian living conditions are essential if the momentum for peace is to be maintained. We are further conscious of the continuation of a number of untenable policies and practices by the Government of Israel; unless revoked, these will impede further progress towards comprehensive peace. In this connection, Indonesia is keen to ensure that the extension of Palestinian self-rule throughout the West Bank, including Jerusalem, proceeds as a matter of urgency.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the positive developments in relations between Jordan and Israel, my delegation would like to stress that comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East also requires progress on the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel negotiating tracks based on the framework established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). In this regard, we note the intense third-party diplomatic efforts being made to ensure such a positive outcome in the Syrian-Israeli negotiating track.

At the same time, however, we are deeply concerned that, despite the notable progress towards peace in the Middle East, the Government of Israel persists in carrying out periodic raids against Lebanon, bringing immense suffering to its innocent people. Such acts constitute a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, and are detrimental to the cause of peace in the region.

The path towards a comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East has long been well marked by numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. These, *inter alia*, call for Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and from the Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders, and the recognition and exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. The United Nations, therefore, has historically played an invaluable role in, and reflected the will of the international community relating to, the settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict. My delegation deems it essential for the Organization to maintain and indeed augment its role in the peace process. Its enormous potential contribution to the peace process in the Middle East must be fully harnessed.

Of course, the United Nations has also made considerable contributions to the economic and social development of the region. Today, as the momentum towards peace gathers pace and the need to complement the progress on the political front with similar advances in the economic arena grows more apparent, the role of the United Nations becomes more pertinent than ever. In this context, my delegation warmly welcomes the consolidation and the further strengthening of the United Nations role in the economic and social fields, as most recently seen in its constructive role in the mobilization and coordination of international financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian people. It is my delegation's hope that Member States will extend their full support to this noble endeavour.

We have reached a critical period in the turbulent history of the Middle East. Yet today the yearning for peace in that region surpasses anything known in the past. Hence, it is imperative to ensure that the region does not relapse into strife and struggle, confrontation and instability, with their unimaginable consequences. Rather, we should seize the unprecedented opportunity now before us and marshal our collective commitment in turning the ongoing endeavours into an irreversible turning-point in history. The hopes and interests of the peoples of the Middle East, and indeed of all the world, call for the achievement of true peace, common security and generalized prosperity.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon): I would like to begin by reiterating Lebanon's wholehearted commitment to the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991 on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Lebanon's participation was in response to the initiative launched by the two sponsors of the peace conference, the United States and the then Soviet Union.

Subsequently, Lebanon has pursued the bilateral talks in Washington with a view to obtaining the full withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which affirms Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized boundaries. We wish to emphasize that the peace process launched in Madrid calls for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. We wish to reaffirm once again Lebanon's position, which has been constant since the Madrid peace conference.

Lebanon demands that Israel comply with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which must be fully implemented. The implementation of that resolution will involve the full withdrawal of Israel to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon. In this respect, I wish to stress the central role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). On this occasion, I also wish to convey our deep appreciation to UNIFIL's troop-contributing countries.

I would particularly like to stress again the need to maintain UNIFIL's strength and efficiency, in view of the important role awaiting it in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). I take this opportunity once more to extend to the officers, soldiers and staff of UNIFIL our thanks for the admirable way in which they have been performing their duties since 1978.

I would like to stress clearly Lebanon's commitment to pursuing the objectives of the Madrid peace process, no matter what the difficulties, in order to achieve its projected goals. Israel must also withdraw fully from the Syrian Golan Heights, in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). No peace will be attained in the region without complete Israeli

withdrawal from South Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights.

The occupation of South Lebanon by Israel since 1978 has brought havoc and violence to our country. Neither the 1978 Litani operation nor the 1982 invasion of Lebanon brought security to Israel. This occupation has proved that Israel's security cannot be maintained by flagrantly breaching the sovereignty of another State.

Furthermore, the concept of the so-called security zone established by Israel has failed to achieve security for Israel. The periodic Israeli aggressions up to the north of Lebanon underline the complete failure of that concept. This is why Israel must fully implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Lebanon is a staunch supporter of the Charter of the United Nations. It believes that the Security Council is an important international body which is responsible for peace and security and in which all countries that are victims of aggression can address breaches of international law, peace and security. From 1968 the Security Council was convened many times at Lebanon's request. However, since 1991 Lebanon has been denied the right to have the Council convened, under the pretext that a meeting of the Council would negatively affect the peace process launched in Madrid. We believe that asking to have the Council convened is not a privilege but a right and an obligation recognized by the United Nations Charter.

In August of this year we called for an emergency meeting of the Council to condemn the Israeli aggression against the village of Deir El-Zahrani and to ask for the lifting of the blockade of Yohmor. Some objected to a meeting of the Council, claiming that a public debate on the matter would divide the Council and have negative repercussions on the peace process. We, on the contrary, believe that debates in the Security Council and subsequent actions would end, or at least contain, Israeli aggressions and would thereby strengthen the peace process.

As long as these aggressions are unchecked, more will be perpetrated. The lack of action only allows Israel to continue its occupation, attacks and blockades without worrying about international opinion. We consider the Security Council to be the indisputable international political and moral authority. We believe that it is in duty bound to protect Member States that are victims of aggression. Continued unchecked aggression is not conducive to creating the appropriate climate we are looking for.

We are very disappointed that after more than three years of negotiations on the Lebanese-Israeli track Israel has not yet released hundreds of our citizens from Israeli prisons and detention camps manned by the Israelis in Lebanon - namely, the Al-Khiam and Marjayoun camps. The Al-Khiam and Marjayoun detention centres in southern Lebanon are notorious for the infliction of physical and psychological torture on prisoners. These detainees are cut off from the outside world and held outside any legal framework. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has adopted many resolutions concerning the issue of human rights in southern Lebanon. Those resolutions demonstrate that Israel is clearly violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907.

Despite repeated appeals by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and demands made by the Lebanese Government and human rights societies around the world and in Lebanon, Israel still refuses to release the prisoners, in violation of the United Nations Charter and basic human rights. Furthermore, Israeli authorities have denied visits to the prisoners by the International Committee of the Red Cross and family members.

Last week, we launched an appeal to the international community in the Third Committee when it was dealing with human-rights questions. We demanded that Israel comply fully with the relevant resolutions on human rights and release the hundreds of Lebanese prisoners. We renew that appeal today.

Here, I must emphasize clearly and categorically that the matter of the repatriation of Palestinian refugees is of basic and crucial importance to Lebanon. Lebanon categorically rejects any attempts whatsoever to settle permanently in Lebanon the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living on our national soil. This consistent position is embodied in the Lebanese Constitution, in accordance with the Taif Agreement of 1989. It represents the firm national consensus of all Lebanese. Lebanon remains fully committed to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination. It calls for the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which clearly and unequivocally affirms the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

It is time for Israel to act accordingly, in order to ensure a just, lasting and peaceful conclusion to the

Middle East peace process. International law, embodied in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, is of the essence in reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Peace and prosperity are what we desire. Lebanon suffered for too long from a war which lasted 16 years and ended only four years ago. We aspire to rebuild our country and provide a better future for our children. This is why our position is consistent with the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Batu (Turkey): In the course of the debate on the situation in the Middle East last year I paid a tribute from this rostrum to President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin for the statesmanship they had displayed in overcoming the obstacles in their path. So we were not surprised when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to these leaders and Foreign Minister Peres in recognition of their courage, commitment and dedication in embarking on the path to peace. Last month, on the occasion of the signing of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty, we applauded another brave statesman, His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan. We hope that the architects of these historic events will set an example for the negotiations between the leaders of the other countries to the peace process and will be instrumental in the realization of lasting and comprehensive peace and stability in the region.

We also hope that the decision to establish diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan will consolidate and enhance the foundations of peace and develop aspects of cooperation in the interests of those countries, thereby expanding the horizons of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in that part of the world.

We have made clear on a number of occasions our position regarding the question of the Middle East and the plight of the Palestinian people in the region. We are convinced that there can be no satisfactory, just and lasting peace in the Middle East unless the settlement is based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967)and 338 (1973).

This year's Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the subsequent implementation agreements, such as the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May, opened the way for the establishment of interim Palestinian self-government beginning in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank town of Jericho. It is expected that at the end of the interim period, the negotiations will have led to a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict based on the relevant resolutions which I have just mentioned.

However, the current situation in the West Bank and Gaza is fragile. There is much more work to be done to ensure that Palestinian autonomy can really start functioning.

The fruits of peace have not yet been seen by the suffering Palestinian people. The international community, which on paper showed considerable generosity towards the Palestinians, has been procrastinating over the transfer of pledges to the Palestinians. This vicious circle may cause uncontrolled explosions and major setbacks, not only in the region but also in the entire peace process. We believe that the donors should work to get the assistance out quickly to enable the people under the autonomous Palestinian administration to receive and feel at least some benefits of peace in their daily lives.

A Turkish economic and trade mission, comprised of Government officials and businessmen from the private sector, paid a visit to the area in order to explore possibilities of cooperation that could contribute to the improvement of reconstruction in Gaza and Jericho. My Prime Minister, during a visit to the region, met with Chairman Arafat and decided, taking into consideration the urgent needs of the Palestinian people in the region, including in Gaza, to send Turkish contractors there with $50 million to start building housing projects. Furthermore, we donated the sum of $2 million in order to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people at the beginning of this year.

In addition, we have been taking active part in the peace process from the very beginning, especially on multilateral tracks. We are prepared to contribute Turkish observers, as requested by both Israel and the Palestinians, to the Temporary International Presence, as called for in the Gaza-Jericho Agreement. We are proud to be one of the few countries whose participation has been sought by both sides.

From 12 to 15 December we are going to host the seventh meeting of the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Refugees in Antalya. As a haven for refugees for many centuries and with our experience in resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees in our country in the past, we are going to propose to initiate a job-creation and employment project for Palestinian refugees.

I would like to conclude my statement by referring to the situation in Lebanon. We attach great importance to the maintenance of that country's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. We stress the importance of the full and strict implementation of the Taif Agreement by all parties concerned, and we also stress once again the need for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls upon Israel to respect Lebanese territorial integrity and to withdraw its forces to the internationally recognized borders.

A lasting solution to the Middle East conflict should be based on the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist in peace behind their internationally recognized and secure borders.

Programme and organization of work

The President: I should like to inform members of the General Assembly of the following additions to our programme of work for the month of December.

On Friday, 2 December, in the morning, the General Assembly will first take action on some of the draft resolutions that were submitted under agenda item 37. Those draft resolutions will be announced in the *Journal*. The Assembly will then consider agenda item 150, entitled "Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War", as already announced. That will be followed by agenda item 30 entitled "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic".

On Monday, 5 December, in the morning, in addition to considering agenda item 43, entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", the Assembly will take up agenda item 34, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti" in order to take action on draft resolution A/49/L.40, as well as agenda item 16 (a), entitled "Election of twelve members of the World Food Council"; agenda item 17 (h), entitled "Appointment of the members of the Consultative Committee on the United Nations Development Fund for Women"; and agenda item 17 (i), entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences".

In the afternoon of the same day, the Assembly will consider sub-item (e) of agenda item 37, "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan". Members will recall that on 28 November the Assembly concluded the debate on sub-items (a) to (d) and (f) and (g) of agenda item 37.

On Friday, 9 December, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, and agenda item 18, "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

In the afternoon of the same day the Assembly will take up the reports of the Sixth Committee.

On Wednesday, 14 December, in the morning, the General Assembly will consider agenda item 154, "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", and it will take up agenda item 22, "Assistance in mine clearance", in order to take action on the draft resolution submitted under this item.

On Thursday, 15 December, in the morning, the Assembly will take up agenda item 19, "Admission of new Members to the United Nations", in order to consider the admission of the Republic of Palau.

In the afternoon of the same day the Assembly will take up the reports of the First Committee.

The list of speakers for agenda items 37 (e) and 154 is now open.

The programme of work of the General Assembly for the month of December will be issued tomorrow in document A/INF/49/5/Add.3.

The scheduling of agenda items pending consideration by the Assembly will be announced in due course.

As we are entering the final phase of this part of the session before the General Assembly recesses for the holidays, I should like to appeal to members to submit, as soon as possible, the final text of the draft resolutions on which action by the Assembly is pending so that the work of the General Assembly will not be delayed.

I should also like to urge delegations, in view of the limited time available, to ensure the timely submission of draft resolutions on agenda items the Assembly has yet to consider. It is especially important to submit as soon as possible those draft resolutions which have programme budget implications. With only three weeks remaining, appropriate time has to be allowed for both the Advisory

Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to review any financial implications.

I should also like once again to ask members to ensure that meetings begin on time, namely at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. precisely. I note that unfortunately sometimes even speakers at the top of the list are not here for the beginning of the meeting and that only delays the debate. On the other hand, sometimes it happens that the times indicated for the length of statements do not correspond to the actual time taken and that requires rescheduling the statements for future meetings.

I also note the prolonged absence of delegations in the Hall, which prevents us from making announcements that are important to all members. I hope that I will be understood and that everybody will come to meetings on time.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

United Nations

A/49/PV.73

General Assembly

Forty-ninth Session

Official Records

73rd Meeting

Thursday, 1 December 1994, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 38 ***(continued)***

The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General (A/49/556, A/49/636)

Mr. Phanit (Thailand): Thailand has been following developments in the Middle East with keen interest. During the past few years, and particularly the past year, we have been happy to witness the peace process gaining momentum across the entire region. Parties to the various conflicts have shown great resolve to settle their differences through peaceful means. Diplomacy and dialogue have replaced threats and the use of force. However, more mutual accommodation continues to be required before a lasting peace can be ensured.

One example of what I have just said is the current situation in Palestine and the Gaza Strip. Over the past years, events in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been encouraging and have strengthened the fabric of peace in the Middle East. A series of historic events have taken place one after the other. The conclusion of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities in Cairo this August has set in motion the tangible implementation process of the much-heralded Declaration of Principles signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993.

As we speak, Palestinians, for the first time in decades, are experiencing self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, though not without serious difficulties. Nevertheless, it can be said that Palestinians are now in control of their own affairs: education, health care, tax collection, social services and tourism. These developments represent important building-blocks of a structure for a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

We are equally encouraged to see that the foundation of peace has been extended and strengthened in yet another historic agreement between the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan. A state of war no longer exists between those two countries. In its place, they have agreed to establish good-neighbourly relations. The peace process continues to gain momentum. Another historic event appears to be on the horizon. Israel and Syria have demonstrated that there is a strong desire to negotiate and reconcile their long-held and bitter differences. Such a peace process requires nurturing through the resolve and the commitment of all the States in the region. It requires a political climate that will safeguard the gains that have already been achieved. The goodwill of the international community is also an important component of this process.

For these reasons, my delegation welcomes the recent statement of the Gulf Cooperation Council declaring an end to economic sanctions imposed on countries which maintain trade relations with Israel. The restoration of diplomatic relations between countries in

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the Gulf and Israel is also actively being explored. This is based on the enlightened self-interest of the leaders and the nations concerned. It will serve to advance the interests of peace and security in the Middle East.

Here, at the current session of the General Assembly, we have noted with satisfaction the prevailing spirit of compromise as we consider issues relating to the Middle East. Let me highlight a few of them. In the First Committee, a consensus was achieved on the draft resolution calling for the establishment of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone for the second consecutive year. In the Fourth Committee, opposition has been replaced by a spirit of cooperation, particularly on how to help the Palestinians overcome the initial obstacles in their return to self-rule. Here in the plenary of the General Assembly, it is my delegation's hope that the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people will achieve a consensus again this year.

The prevailing spirit of compromise fosters mutual trust and confidence among the parties concerned which, in turn, will have a salutary effect on the efforts to accelerate the peace process in the region itself. But while there have been encouraging developments, there have also been serious obstacles placed in the path of the peace process. Acts of violence have been committed by those who harbour ill designs on the peace and reconciliation process among the parties concerned. The recent troubles and bloodshed in the Gaza Strip under Palestinian self-rule clearly demonstrate that the situation remains fragile. Half a century of conflict and occupation have clearly taken their toll on the Palestinian people. Living conditions have been harsh. The social fabric has been adversely affected. Economic deprivation has been extensive.

Positive developments have inevitably raised Palestinian expectations. My delegation commends the demonstration of patience and far-sightedness by all sides in the recent unrest. The international community should not let the Palestinians struggle alone. The international community must work together with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that the support and promotion of economic and social development in the occupied territories are sustained. This is the only way to bring about tangible improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinians. It is a basis for ensuring the initial fulfilment of a long process of successful self-rule itself.

The appointment of Mr. Terje Rod Larsen as the Special Coordinator of the United Nations to the occupied territories is significant and timely. His role in liaising with the Palestinian Authority, as well as in overseeing the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in the occupied territories should contribute substantively to improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people. My delegation notes with satisfaction that participants in the Conference to Support Middle East Peace, convened in Washington in October 1993, pledged $2.4 billion in economic assistance to the occupied territories for the five-year transition period. We must see to it that the pledges are realized.

For our part, the Royal Thai Government attaches great importance to the activities of United Nations agencies in providing day-to-day assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. We are pleased to be among that who have consistently made financial contributions to UNRWA. We will continue to do so.

The welfare of the Palestinians has been of great concern to the countries in South-East Asia and has been accorded priority on the agenda of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers. At their meeting in Bangkok last July, they issued a Joint Communiqué which, among other things, stated the following:

> "The Foreign Ministers welcomed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993 and the Cairo Agreement of 4 May 1994 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). They urged the international community to provide the Palestinian Authority with the necessary financial resources for the successful implementation of the agreements. They also urged Israel and the other parties directly involved in the Middle East question to intensify their engagement in the peace process to achieve an expeditious, just and peaceful settlement."

Thailand will continue to follow the situation in the Middle East with great interest. We wish to reaffirm our support for a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as other relevant United Nations resolutions. We also hope that the international community will maintain its resolve in supporting and

nurturing the ongoing efforts, until a just and durable peace is obtained in this region of the world.

Mr. Owada (Japan): During this past year, we have witnessed historic progress in efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It is clear that the collapse of the cold war world order has had a significant impact on this region as well, to the extent that the region had come to be afflicted, in both political and economic contexts, by the confrontation between East and West from the beginning of the tragic course of events that commenced immediately after the conclusion of the Second World War. Under such circumstances, the dramatic change in the international environment brought about by the demise of the cold war has come to present the countries of the region and the international community with an historic new situation which is at once a challenge and an opportunity.

The most recent and dramatic achievement in this regard, following the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) last year, was the conclusion in October of a peace treaty by Israel and Jordan. Japan heartily welcomes this achievement and expresses its profound admiration for the courage and resolve demonstrated by the leaders of the two countries. By putting an end to the deep-rooted enmity and mistrust, Prime Minister Rabin of Israel and King Hussein of Jordan have given their peoples a historic hope and expectation for a genuine, stable and prosperous future built on cooperative relations.

Now the international community must focus on the negotiations between Syria and Israel, which are the key to achieving a durable peace throughout the region. Indeed, peace in the Middle East will not take a firm hold unless Syria and Israel agree to embark upon a new course of reconciliation and cooperation. In view of Syria's geopolitical importance, its *rapprochement* with Israel could broaden the circle of Arab States willing to embrace peace, and instil confidence in the countries and peoples throughout the region that peace will in fact prevail and endure all over the region.

Naturally, it would be too optimistic to expect that a breakthrough or rapid progress along this track could be easily achieved, since there still remains a good deal of hard bargaining between the two parties on such issues as withdrawal from the Golan, the security measures that will be required and the normalization of diplomatic and economic relations. Nevertheless, both Israel and Syria understand that the tide has turned towards peace; they are serious about building a Middle East in which Arabs and Israelis can live side by side and cooperate for their mutual benefit.

In addition to these bilateral negotiations, multilateral talks on issues of common interest to the people of the region are also extremely significant. These talks are an integral part of the peace process and are meant to prepare for the changes that will continue to reshape the Middle East while fostering a spirit of cooperation and confidence among the parties concerned.

Japan has been actively participating in the peace process through working closely with the regional parties as the lead organizer of the Working Group on environment and as the co-organizer of the Working Groups on regional economic development and on water resources.

A significant development that took place in the context of the environmental Working Group was its adoption of the code of conduct in the field of the environment at its meeting held in Bahrain in October this year. Since the Middle East consists of a number of regional parties that have to live together in a relatively small area, it is extremely important for them to share a common code of conduct and common objectives in the field of environmental conservation.

Tourism is another area of promising potential for the region to cultivate. It is an area in which Japan has been working closely with other interested parties within the regional economic development Working Group. No one can doubt the rich historical legacies and touristic resources in that region. Consequently, there have been vigorous discussions on how to develop a regional training centre for tourism, an improved touristic infrastructure, joint marketing, and a regional institution for cooperation.

Having spoken about all these felicitous developments, we must not lose sight of the fact that there are those who are working to undermine the peace process, even as we celebrate the progress that continues to be made.

The recent wave of terrorist acts both inside and outside Israel is principally aimed at destroying the political will of the Israeli and Arab leaders and the peaceful aspirations of all the peoples of the Middle East. The enemies of peace must not be permitted to succeed. The international community must stand against terror as

firmly as it stands for peace. Japan stresses the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation in taking effective measures to prevent, combat and eliminate all forms of terrorism.

The peace and security of the Gulf region is another concern. Iraq, which has the potential to play a decisive role in the Gulf, should be regarded as a key to the peace and stability of the region. This past October Iraq once again alarmed the world by moving its elite troops southward to the Kuwaiti border. Whatever its intentions might have been, the fact is that this sudden military action by Iraq reminded many in the world of the crisis of a few years ago, when the stability of the Gulf region as a whole came to be threatened. Fortunately, the international community this time again acted swiftly and appropriately. It was fortunate that through such decisive and concerted international action the possibility of a recurrence of the tragic 1990 Gulf crisis was averted.

In this connection, it should be noted that the Government of Iraq recently took a decision to recognize the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the State of Kuwait. Japan, in agreement with the view expressed in the statement of the President of the Security Council on 16 November, recognizes this decision as a significant step in the right direction towards full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is hoped that the Iraqi authorities will take further steps to respond to the will of the international community, as reflected in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

At present the Middle East is faced with a unique historic opportunity. Within the context of the structural transformation now taking place in the international system in the post-cold-war era, it has a chance, not to be missed, to achieve durable peace, stability and prosperity. This we can do if we succeed in joining forces in an all-out effort to consolidate mutual confidence and interdependence and promote a new regional partnership. Japan wishes to be an integral part of this international effort to effect such historic change. It pledges its full cooperation in working to that end with all the parties concerned.

Mr. Abu Odeh (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Three weeks ago today, my country, Jordan, and Israel exchanged the instruments of ratification of the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty, thus crowning a three-year effort of bilateral negotiations within the framework of the Madrid Conference. In this regard, and in addition to the feelings of satisfaction at what has been achieved, one must highlight the fact that the Peace Treaty concluded by the two parties is in full conformity with the principles and provisions of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which formed the basis of the negotiations according to the Madrid terms of reference. The treaty is also a faithful translation into reality of the land-for-peace formula. Accordingly, the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty can be considered the first full fruit of the Madrid Conference, as it is the first Peace Treaty to result from the Madrid Conference. Under the Treaty, Jordan has recovered its full sovereignty over its territory that was under occupation and has committed itself, together with Israel, to building a firmly rooted strongly founded peace that encompasses all areas of transaction and interaction between the two neighbouring States whose wish is to coexist and cooperate in a climate of security and stability. The desired peace as provided for in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) was described as just and durable, that is to say, it has to be equitable and lasting.

One must note that the Security Council members who drafted the resolution at the time, put justice before durability. They were quite right. History teaches us that peace cannot last if it carries within it the seeds of inequity and injustice. The fact that the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty is characterized by justice, ensures that the peace based upon it will be durable and that it will be strengthened by the achievement of comprehensive peace and interaction, cooperation and joint action by Governments and peoples.

However, the Middle East conflict, as is well-known, has its own specific nature which arises from its origins and dynamics.

As for the origins of the conflict, it started between two emerging nationalist movements that clashed over one land, that of Palestine, which was then under the control of a third party. The conflict quickly evolved, due to external and internal factors, to the point where it became, in 1948, an international dispute that was focused primarily on protecting the rights of the Palestinian Arab people and the rejection of the establishment of a State for the Jews in Palestine. After the 1967 war, it developed further with the emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a new active party representing the Palestinian people in the conflict — a conflict which now focused on bringing about a full Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories which Israel occupied by war, and on restoring the national rights of the Palestinian people. Thus, the parties to the conflict

increased in number and the objectives of the adversaries changed with the implicit recognition of Israel by the Arab States in their acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Since the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the situation in the Middle East took its place alongside the question of Palestine on the agenda of the General Assembly. As a result of the continued state of war between the Arab States and Israel and the outbreak of several wars at various times, new issues emerged other than those related to occupation, the national rights of the Palestinian people and security. Among the most important of those issues, of which Arab Jerusalem is the most significant, are those of the refugees and displaced persons, the settlements, water, the rights of Palestinians to self-determination and the occupation of southern Lebanon. All of these issues have been considered by the United Nations, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly and appropriate resolutions have been adopted thereon on the basis of international legality. It was in this context that the Arab-Israeli conflict acquired the complexity that resulted from its long duration, the multiplicity of the parties involved in it and the multiformity of its manifestations.

These facts did not escape the architects of the framework of the peace negotiations or the co-sponsors of the Madrid Conference. Hence their emphasis on the need for a comprehensive peace. Consequently, the desired peace that would put an end to this conflict came to be characterized not only by justice and durability, but also by comprehensiveness, that is to say, it must be an equitable, lasting and all-embracing peace. The achievement of such a comprehensive peace means that all parties should arrive at and conclude peace treaties that deal with all the problems, both those that caused the conflict initially and those that arose from it. In this context, the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty is a significant contribution towards the achievements of the comprehensive peace which both the negotiating parties and the international community are committed to achieve.

Proceeding from this, failure by Israel or by any other Arab party to arrive at a peace treaty, or any dereliction of the duty to find a just solution to any problem that relates to the conflict, such as the issues of refugees and displaced persons, Arab Jerusalem, the settlements, water, the right to self-determination and southern Lebanon, will be tantamount to planting a germ of conflict in the soil, side by side with the seeds of peace, a germ that will bide its time and, at any inauspicious moment, flower forth to destroy the seeds of peace and endanger all that has been achieved.

Jordan, as party to the conflict until 14 September 1993, the date of its signing of the joint agenda with Israel, and as a partner in peace-building since that date, has achieved, together with Israel, a successful experiment by concluding a Peace Treaty on 26 October 1994. Primarily, this success may be attributed to the commitment of both parties to Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and the land-for-peace formula as well as to the trust that both sides were able to engender in the course of their negotiations — trust that has been built on the goodwill demonstrated by both parties, as exemplified by the following:

1. The public appearance of His Highness Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, in the presence of President Clinton at the White House on 1 October 1993;

2. Agreement by the Jordanian and Israeli sides to move the negotiations from Washington to the region;

3. Agreement by the parties to form sub-committees of negotiators to discuss and conduct joint studies on mutually beneficial projects, should peace be achieved. Both sides thus engaged in a kind of joint action, even if it was theoretical, while continuing to negotiate;

4. The fact that talks between the parties, alternately, in Jordan and in Israel;

5. The Washington Declaration, signed by His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel at a public ceremony that was broadcast live by the media to the whole world. In that declaration, the two parties agreed to end the state of war that had existed between them;

6. The opening of the first land crossing since 1948 between the Jordanian and Israeli ports of Aqaba and Eilat, on the Gulf of Aqaba, for nationals of third States;

7. The connection of the Jordanian and Israeli telephone networks for the first time since 1948. Citizens of both countries now use those lines for contacts by telephone.

However, my country, which concluded a Peace Treaty with Israel on 26 October 1994, wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the achievement of comprehensive peace and looks forward to the conclusion by the other parties of peace treaties that would solve all the problems relating to the conflict at the very earliest,

and thus achieve the just and comprehensive solution aspired after by the international community as represented by the United Nations. The peace map, as it exists today, shows that two States only, namely Egypt and Jordan, have signed Peace Treaties with Israel. As for the Palestine Liberation Organization, it is in the process of negotiating peace with Israel within the framework of the Declaration of Principles reached by the two sides in Oslo.

As for Syria and Lebanon, both countries continue to negotiate individually with Israel in an attempt to reach a peace agreement, while the co-sponsors of the Madrid conference remain committed to achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We hope that sincere and concerted efforts will be made to ensure success on the Syrian-Israeli and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks, for unless Israel arrives at and concludes peace treaties with Syria and Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and of the land-for-peace formula which was fully respected in concluding the Egyptian-Israeli and the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaties — the desired comprehensive peace will not be achieved and all that has been accomplished so far will remain blurred and incomplete.

In addition to the tangible problems on which United Nations resolutions have been adopted, there are intangible problems, including the psychological legacy inherited by the peoples, who, for many decades, have suffered the consequences of the Middle East conflict. I call this a problem because the Middle East conflict has for generations caused the peoples of the region much pain, suffering, frustration and many deep suspicions, which have resulted in attitudes and impressions that do not make it easy for those people to move from a state of alienation, apprehension and suspicion to a state of peaceful interaction based on mutual confidence. The peace documents signed by leaders will not be sufficient by themselves to bring about the required transformation. As His Majesty King Hussein said in his speech before the United States Congress on 26 July 1994:

> "It should never be forgotten that peace resides ultimately not in the hands of Governments but in the hands of the people. For unless peace can be made real to the men, women and children of the Middle East, the best efforts of negotiators will come to nought."

It is the broad masses who consolidate peace, but these masses do not deal with peace nor understand it in mere abstract terms. They view peace through its tangible dividends.

Therefore, my delegation believes that the United Nations, the provider of the terms of reference for the negotiators and the embodiment of international legality through its numerous resolutions relating to the Middle East conflict, could play another role in this area. Its Members could take the initiative to help the parties to peace raise the standard of living of their peoples, and it should expand and increase the various United Nations programmes operating in those countries, including mine. Experience has shown that when a just peace that is free of any seeds of conflict is achieved, it will always need — especially at the beginning — power to protect it, money to finance it and statesmen to administer it.

Consequently, my delegation looks forward to the adoption by the General Assembly of an appropriate resolution reflecting what has been achieved and stressing the need for supporting the parties involved in the peace process, especially Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority, not only at the moral level but also at the financial and developmental levels, for peace will not be achieved nor protected by praise and talk alone. The faltering progress of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho demonstrates that conclusively indeed.

Proceeding from this, my delegation is pleased to announce its support for the goal of the Casablanca summit for the development of the Middle East and the North African region, in which Jordan participated with a high-level delegation headed by His Highness Crown Prince Hassan. It is also my delegation's pleasure to reiterate, in this context, Jordan's announcement that it will host the forthcoming summit conference in Amman to conclude the discussion of all the issues and ideas raised at the first summit conference, which was presided over by His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco.

Mr. Haidri (Pakistan) (interpretation from Arabic):

"O mankind! We created
You from a single pain
Of male and female,
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
You may know each other
(Not that you may despise
Each other). Verily,
The most honoured of you

In the sight of God
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of You."

(Suza XLIX, verse 13)

The past few months have witnessed significant developments towards the peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict. Today, this vitally important region stands at a crossroads. The peoples of the Middle East have demonstrated a serious commitment to achieving a peaceful settlement to their long-festering problems by forswearing the path of conflict and recrimination and making an earnest effort to promote peace and understanding amongst themselves through dialogue.

The Government of Pakistan has followed with deep concern and with keen interest the situation in the occupied Arab territories since the beginning of the crisis. The recent accords and agreements arrived at between the parties involved constitute a first step towards the achievement of a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We fully share the conviction that the peace process should lead to the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland. We earnestly hope that the final settlement will include the withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Moreover, we hope it will be a settlement that addresses all aspects of the Middle East problem, including the return of the refugees.

Pakistan's support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable rights is well known. We have consistently supported Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as a basis for the resolution of the Middle East and Palestinian problems.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, it has always been assumed that a solution to the Palestinian problem would pave the way for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. My delegation welcomes the fact that, in tandem with progress on the Palestinian issue, there has been significant movement towards a solution of the problems between Israel and Jordan. In this context, we note with satisfaction the conclusion of the Washington Declaration of July 1994 and the Treaty of Peace of October 1994 between the Governments of Jordan and Israel. We sincerely hope that there will soon be similar progress towards resolution of the conflict on the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese tracks.

If a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is to be achieved, it is imperative that there be simultaneous success on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. We fully share the view that unless these fundamental issues are adequately addressed, peace will continue to elude the region.

It is of the utmost importance to maintain the momentum that has been engendered in the negotiating process. We share the international community's expectation that there should be no delay in the implementation of the agreements that have been reached so far. Moreover, the provisions of these agreements must be complied with in both letter and spirit. We urge all the parties concerned to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the vision of lasting peace in the Middle East.

The United Nations must continue its efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East problem. The Organization and its specialized agencies can make a valuable and positive contribution to the expansion of the scope of assistance to the Palestinian people. They have a special responsibility to help to build the socio-economic infrastructure and national institutions that are a prerequisite of the attainment of peace and prosperity in the Middle East. In this context, my delegation welcomes the important and timely steps taken by the United Nations Secretary-General — in particular the appointment of a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to act as the focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territory.

The crucial link between the political process and the socio-economic dimension of the problem must not be neglected. This link is vitally important for the achievement of lasting stability in the region. The Paris accord of April 1994 was a reflection of the international community's resolve to assist the parties to achieve this objective.

Pakistan, for its part, is willing to contribute to the achievement of a lasting peace in the region on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements between the parties concerned. We are also prepared to participate in national reconstruction efforts. Our ties with the peoples of the Middle East region are

deep-rooted. Pakistan looks forward to further reinforcing these natural links of common history.

Today, in the Middle East, there is a strong yearning for peace that surpasses anything that was known in the past. It is therefore essential to ensure that the region does not lapse into another period of strife and instability. The international community should seize this historic opportunity to ensure the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Although time has marched on and we are nearing the beginning of the fourth year since the holding of the Madrid Conference on peace in the Middle East, the recent peace talks and the accompanying international efforts have not helped the peace process to progress towards the desired target of establishing a genuine comprehensive peace based on full and faithful implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the land-for-peace principle.

The peace initiative of the United States, to which Syria responded, proceeded from clear foundations, which led to the holding of the Madrid Conference. Those foundations are the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); land for peace; and the achievement of comprehensive and just solutions on all negotiating tracks.

Mr. Ansari (India), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It should be recalled here that during the Washington peace talks, Syria was the party that was most interested in dealing with the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This proceeded from Syria's realization that any solution that does not deal with the quintessential core of the conflict will be inadequate and will never lead to the desired peace. At an early stage — specifically, during the sixth round of the Washington talks — Syria submitted a working paper containing principles that was described as historic because the principles it set out opened the road to peace. Syria followed that by putting forward the principle of full withdrawal for full peace in order to advance the peace process. However, Syria's serious approach was met with Israel's attempt to avoid issues of substance in favour of issues with no bearing whatsoever on the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace.

At the Damascus summit with President Clinton, President Hafez Al-Assad reaffirmed Syria's commitment to the peace process and its earnest desire to work towards a just and comprehensive peace as a strategic option that guarantees Arab rights, ends Israel's occupation of the occupied Arab territories, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and thus enables all peoples of the region to live in peace, security and dignity. President Assad also reaffirmed to President Clinton, that Syria is prepared, on the basis of the principle of full withdrawal for full peace, to commit itself to the substantive requirements of peace by establishing normal peaceful relations with Israel in exchange for complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, and from southern Lebanon.

Hardly a day goes by without the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan reaffirming their national identity and their attachment to their motherland, regardless of the arbitrary practices of the Israeli occupation authorities and all the laws and pieces of legislation which have been enacted and which are null and void under international law.

Following its occupation of the Golan in its 1967 aggression, Israel expelled 120,000 Syrian Arab inhabitants of the Golan who sought refuge in their homeland Syria. Those people still await the opportunity to return to their homes, to recover their property and to resume their normal lives. In addition, Israel has enacted a series of laws, regulations and decrees by virtue of which the Israeli military authorities have expropriated 80 per cent of the entire land area of the occupied Arab Syrian Golan, and built 40 settlements, in addition to the many military and paramilitary settlements whose number is not known.

Complete, just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved under continuing occupation or while new settlement plans are being carried out regardless of the illegitimate nature of such settlements or the fact that they are a major impediment to peace.

The fact that Israel continues to earmark funds for construction projects in the occupied Syrian Golan is certainly not a positive sign that indicates any Israeli cooperation with or effective response to the United States endeavours to find a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the situation in the region. Since the United States initiative, Syria has made every possible effort to present Israel with a united front on the basis of clear principles and a position based on continuing coordination between all the parties to the peace process, thus preventing Israel from circumventing the principles

of the Madrid conference and Security Council resolutions governing the peace process. None the less, the ranks of unity have been broken, and the parties that did so must now be accountable to their own people.

In this context, we would like to reaffirm that the close concomitance of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks will withstand all attempts to separate them. We shall insist on our firm position, based on the resolutions of international legality, in favour of a peace that would return our occupied lands and guarantee our rights and dignity. Syria's position of insisting on a just and comprehensive solution and rejecting partial piecemeal solutions, proceeds from our conviction that a just and comprehensive solution is the only viable one. Anything else is liable, at any time, to fail, regress and collapse. It has been proved that separate agreements do not bring true peace to the region. Indeed, the opposite may be true. What the region needs is genuine peace, which is impossible to achieve unless legitimate rights are completely restored in accordance with the resolutions of international legality upon which the very peace process has been founded. Thus, Syria believes that it is important for the whole region, that the peace process should continue and that negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks should lead to complete withdrawal from southern Lebanon and from the Golan Heights. That would open the road to genuine and firm peace in the region. If that objective is not achieved because of the intransigence of the Israeli position or for any other reason, we believe that what has taken place on some negotiating tracks will not lead to real stability in the region.

There is no doubt that circumventing the basic requirements of a just and comprehensive peace and preempting the ending of Israel's occupation of the Arab territories with ideas, proposals and plans that speak of economic cooperation with the Israeli occupiers will not make Israel respond to the requirements of the desired genuine peace. Indeed, it merely affords Israel the opportunity of circumventing the need to meet the requirements of a just and comprehensive peace and encourages it to persist in its intransigent positions that reject the implementation of the resolutions of international legality on withdrawing from the occupied Arab territories.

The substance of the conflict never was and never will be cooperation between Israel and the Arabs. Rather, it is occupation, aggression, expansion, the acquisition of territory and the expulsion of Arab citizens. Therefore, finding a genuine solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must begin and end with putting an end to occupation, and by returning to the Arabs their lands and their usurped rights.

The peace that the Middle East needs is not the sort of peace that is based on Israeli military might. It is significant indeed that regardless of the ambience of peace, Israel has increased its military budget for next year and continues to stockpile the most modern of weapons and intransigently refuses any scrutiny of its nuclear programme — which it does not accept to place under any international supervision. The fact that Israel continues to stockpile weapons casts grave doubts on and raises many questions about what Israel intends to do with such rearmaments. The fact of the matter is that it is Israel's armament and its possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction that pose the real threat to peace in the region, now and in the future and give rise to the concern and suspicions that haunt all the region's States. The very existence of such weapons in the region, despite the peace process, will always be a threat to peace and a factor of instability and insecurity in the Middle East.

Therefore, the search for peace must be accompanied by — indeed, it must be focused as a first priority on — the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and nuclear warheads in the possession of Israel, as Israel can use these weapons at any moment, to threaten peace and undermine the sovereignty and independence of all the countries of the region.

Since the beginning of the peace process more than three years ago at Madrid, and throughout the bilateral talks in Washington, Israel has continued to focus on its own security doctrine which it links to peace and to what it calls its security requirements. Those requirements, it believes, are to be satisfied in the Arab depth and at the expense of Arabs' sovereignty over their lands. This doctrine, which differs from all accepted concepts and doctrines of security in the world, shows that it is the Arabs and not Israel that are in need of security.

Those who occupy the lands of others do not have the right to speak of security requirements. If it is the right of all parties to seek their own security, it is evident that Syria's security will be achieved, above all, by ending the occupation and establishing peace and security for all, especially when it is peace that is guaranteed by the international community. Security cannot be achieved at the expense of Arab lands and rights nor at the expense of Syria's complete sovereignty over its territory. Security arrangements cannot be set up at the expense of any one party; they must be equal and mutually beneficial, following complete withdrawal. As a matter of fact, it is the Arab side that may need much

stronger security arrangements than the Israeli side, for reasons that are known to all.

Israel has continued to mislead international public opinion by alleging that the Golan was always a source of threats to its security and by claiming that its continued occupation of the entire Golan or of certain strategic areas thereof is a necessary requirement of its security. However, if we look at the military situation in the Golan region from 1949 to 1967, it becomes crystal clear that Israel was always the party that initiated aggression against the Syrian citizens there. Proof of this is in the many Security Council resolutions that condemned those Israeli acts. These facts deflate the Israeli arguments that withdrawal from the Golan would endanger Israeli security. The issue here, as far as Israel is concerned, is not security but of the expansionist ambitions that Israel has in the Golan Heights, and they are nothing new.

Syria believes that three years after the beginning of the peace process the time has come for the United States of America to live up to its commitments, particularly now that Israel is openly playing its obstructionist role and making not inconsiderable efforts to remove any substance from the unbiased neutral American role in the peace process. It is attempting to marginalize that role and to turn the United States into a mere observer that will bless a *Pax Israeliana*, which would then perpetuate injustice, keep occupation in place and deprive the Arabs of their fundamental rights.

Syria is very keen for the international political efforts to succeed, particularly those of the United States, and is eager to see them bear fruit in the interests of the peace process. Here, we welcome once again the continuing American role and call upon the United States of America to play an even more effective role if the peace process is truly to achieve the goals for which it was initiated.

No matter how long it may last, occupation will never erase Syrian-Arab sovereignty over the Golan. This is a Syrian territory and has always been a Syrian territory. It must be returned to its legitimate owners. This has been clearly recognized and stipulated in the Security Council resolutions, in the American initiative and in the Madrid Conference formula.

At this session of the General Assembly, my delegation has submitted the annual draft resolution, which has been amended this year to differ radically from those submitted in previous years, both in substance and in form. The draft resolution was unanimously adopted by the Group of Arab States at its meeting on 8 November 1994. The draft resolution is being submitted as an Arab text. It has been shortened so that it may concentrate on essential elements of principle that must be reaffirmed, despite the use of new language thereon.

The Arab Group of States hopes that the draft resolution will achieve the widest possible support. May I conclude my statement by quoting the words of my Foreign Minister at the beginning of the session, as I believe his message should be reaffirmed anew, "Syria wants peace and realizes that all parties have a stake in this peace. It realizes also that peace has objective requirements, and it is prepared to fulfil those requirements that are agreed upon. Syria means what it says and adheres to what it means. The land-for-peace equation must be implemented in both its parts. The return of the entire Golan is not open to compromise, unjustified delay or a misplaced testing of intention. On this basis, Syria supports a genuine peace — a peace that lives and flourishes without artificial obstacles or arbitrary conditions. Putting on the peace process a greater burden than it can bear does not help to achieve peace; rather, it poses a threat to the process. The peace process should not be weighted down with issues that fall outside its framework."

Mr. Al-Ni'mah (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Praised be God whose wisdom decrees all that befalls us on this earth. It has been His wish, after the many calamities that followed upon one another in the Middle East and plunged its people in suffering and pain, that a glimmer of hope should emerge to promise change, tranquility and peace. That peace which first appeared as a glimmer of hope soon turned into a dream that promised to free the souls of men with its call, a call that is inspired by divine religions, a call from the depths of the past, a call for peace on earth and goodwill for all men. Therein resides the divine message, the message of wisdom and good sense.

The Madrid conference was the beginning of a breakthrough towards peace in the Middle East. Then the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization promised a dawn of hope in our region which has been ravaged by bloody conflicts, destructive wars, and dire suffering by the Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peoples under the yoke of Israeli occupation. After a long wait on the part of Israel, the phase of interim autonomy in Gaza and Jericho began, the Palestinian Authority assumed its responsibilities under the presidency of the Palestinian leader, Yasser

Arafat, the agreement to end the state of war between Jordan and Israel was signed, and a peace treaty between the two countries was signed in October 1994.

This succession of positive developments strengthened our hope that the Arab-Israeli conflict, one of the most violent regional conflicts the world has seen in the second half of the twentieth century was about to come to an end. This breakthrough has been made possible thanks to the determination of the international community and of our international Organizations, to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination, and to bring about Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

It was hoped, in the light of these positive developments on the right road towards a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, that the process would continue on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Unfortunately, the Syrian track is still beset by obstacles and difficulties. When Syria accepted the United States initiative, it did so on the strength of the United States pledge to work for a just and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the principles of international legality embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and the land-for-peace principle. In so doing, Syria opted for participation in the peace process in order to arrive at that much desired objective of just, lasting and comprehensive peace which, it felt, was the vital requirement of all the peoples of the Middle East who aspired after peace, security and prosperity. This was the promise and that was Syria's clear response to it. However, Israel's response did not rise to the level of expectations.

It has not declared that it will withdraw completely from the Golan Heights, which it continues to occupy in contravention of the norms of international law and the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. We hope the United States will continue to use its good offices and hope that the ongoing efforts will be brought to completion. We also hope that Israel, which accepted the land-for-peace principle, will announce its intention to effect its total withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for total peace.

Lebanon occupies a special place in the context of the Middle East situation. It has been ravaged by a devastating civil war that was brought about by complex factors that arose from the region's problems. Lebanon also fell victim to a destructive Israeli invasion and to the occupation of a large part of its territory which Israel, without any legal justification or entitlement, claims to be a "security belt". Southern Lebanon has been the target of Israeli bombardment and air raids, which have brought down great suffering and destruction upon the populace.

All this took place while Security Council resolution 425 (1978) stipulated, *inter alia*, full withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, and underscored the need to restore peace and security to the area, and to help the Lebanese Government regain its full authority over all its territory.

God help the people of southern Lebanon: Israeli raids have brought down great suffering upon them. In every street and every house there is tragedy. These are times of iniquity and intransigence, terror and fear. Cries of distress can be heard from every home, cries that will not cease until all these territories have been liberated.

Despite the pain and suffering, despite death and injury, Lebanon remains a contributor to the civilization of the world and a beacon of peace in the region: Lebanon, the fount of peace in the region; Lebanon which, in the dark of night, shines its light of peace, culture and civilizing ideas. May God save Lebanon and protect it from all evil. Whenever it suffers under attack, we feel for Lebanon, that apex of innovation and creativity. God save Lebanon, and protect it from all evil. Lebanon will always remain a generous country founded on the desire to foster all that is fine and beautiful.

Proceeding from its national responsibilities and belief in Arab partnership, Qatar supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. It participates in reconstruction efforts in Lebanon so that it may become once again what it was in the past — a land of security, peace and prosperity and a contributor to progress.

The State of Qatar has participated actively in the peace process and has supported it from the very outset. It has welcomed all the efforts that have been made and continue to be made to ensure the success of that process. As part of our contribution to the peace process, Qatar has participated from the very beginning in the multilateral negotiations, while insisting that they must complement and not replace bilateral negotiations, and that the desired result can be reached only if the peace achieved in the region is just, lasting and comprehensive. Proceeding from this, peace in the region is achieved. That is why Qatar hosted the fifth meeting of the working group on arms control and regional security, held at

Doha from 2 to 5 May 1994, a meeting which undoubtedly helped develop concepts of arms control and the ways and means of achieving the arms reduction that is needed to consolidate regional security in the Middle East.

During the general debate at this session of the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr Al-Thani, stated my country's position on arms control and regional security in the Middle East, stressing the need to persevere in efforts to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, in the Middle East.

In pursuing its policy of supporting the peace process Qatar also supported and participated in all sincere international efforts to ensure the success of the peace process in the Middle East. It was in this context that a high-level delegation from Qatar participated in the Casablanca Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit.

While security questions are among the most vital issues facing the Middle East, security of the Gulf region remains at the forefront of such questions, because of the special importance of the Gulf region as a primary source of energy for the whole world.

As members are aware, the Gulf region was the theatre of two successive wars whose after effects continue to encumber the region with heavy burdens. This makes us aspire after a future of security, prosperity and peace for the region as a whole. That is why the State of Qatar, under the wise guidance of its Emir, His Royal Highness Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, and Crown Prince Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, has consistently participated in every effort aimed at addressing the crucial issues of our Gulf region and our Arab and Islamic nation — and has supported the striving by the Gulf Cooperation Council to serve the interests of the countries and peoples of the Gulf region of which we are an integral part and whose security is vitally linked to our own. Therefore, Qatar attaches the highest importance to the maintenance of stability in the region and to ensuring that no regional changes are imposed by force. In this context, Qatar reiterates its conviction that the maintenance of the region's security and stability requires the consolidation of cooperation amongst the Gulf states on the basis of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for international law and the settlement of conflicts by peaceful means, through negotiation, mediation and, if need be, through recourse to the International Court of Justice.

As regards the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, our consistent position has been that the territorial integrity of Iraq must be preserved and that the suffering of its people should be alleviated. Iraq must implement in full all relevant Security Council resolutions. The State of Qatar, through a statement by its Council of Ministers, expressed satisfaction with regard to the positive statement by the Security Council concerning Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's sovereignty, independence and international borders. Qatar welcomed the statement as a significant positive step towards normalization of the situation in the region and as a preparatory step towards alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The Council of Ministers, in its statement, commended the positive role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in eliminating hotbeds of tension and conflict in the world. Those efforts were clearly seen in our region in the demarcation of the international borders between Iraq and Kuwait in accordance with resolution 833 (1993) and other relevant Security Council resolutions.

As the Assembly considers the situation in the Middle East, we must commend our Organization for the serious and sincere role it has played in dealing with the problem of the Middle East, which has been on the General Assembly's agenda since the inception of the United Nations. The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council in this respect have laid the foundations of the Middle East peace process and have contributed to the maintenance of peace in the region. We all know that the first peace-keeping operation undertaken by the United Nations was in the Middle East, and that the United Nations observers still monitor the truce, disengagement and peace accords reached on the borders between Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Israel.

Since the beginning of the peace process, the United Nations has played an active part, especially in multilateral negotiations, on regional issues. The Organization has set up working groups on every one of those issues. We commend in particular the effective role of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and commend his efforts and good offices in support of the peace process on all tracks.

In spite of all obstacles, set backs and attempts at undermining the Middle East peace process, we still hope that the international community will ensure the success of the process and the achievement of the goal of

establishing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Our optimism is strengthened by the clear political will demonstrated by all parties to continue to move forward towards the peace that the whole region aspires after in order for its States and peoples to live in peace, security, justice and prosperity. Who is to tell evil that good will vanquish it and who is to tell injustice that the righteous will triumph?

Mr. Chong-Ha Yoo (Republic of Korea): Over the past 45 years, the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict has been at the core of the troubles in the Middle East and the source of endless human suffering and numerous armed conflicts. However, with the remarkable progress achieved during the past year, a beacon of hope radiates across the region. The signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area on 4 May 1994, the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities on 29 August 1994, and the Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan on 26 October 1994 signalled to the world that genuine peace in the region might be within grasp for the first time in decades.

The Republic of Korea sincerely welcomes the advances made thus far and remains strongly supportive of the efforts to secure a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict based upon Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We should like to pay tribute to King Hussein bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, President Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel, whose exemplary leadership and courageous tenacity have led their countries to the door of a future built on peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that these achievements mark only the beginning of a long and arduous journey for peace in the Middle East. As we are well aware, the euphoria generated by recent events has been dampened not only by deep skepticism but also by gross acts of violence and bloodshed. The highly deplorable acts of violence over the past months have exposed the very fragile nature of the peace settlement. Given the profound obstacles which stand in the path of peace, it is necessary to give further impetus to the Palestinian track to ensure that it does not lag behind the pace of the peace process.

The success of the peace process depends heavily on the establishment of a sound political and economic base. Therefore, the need for support by the United Nations and the international community to assist the Palestinian people in the difficult task of rebuilding their society has never been more crucial. Following the Washington Conference of 1 October 1993, the Government of the Republic of Korea decided to offer $12 million for the rehabilitation projects of the Palestinian people for the period from 1994 to 1998.

In order for peace to be firmly rooted in the Middle East, it is also important that progress be achieved on the Lebanese and the Syrian tracks. Unless these inseparable aspects of the equation are adequately addressed, the peace in the region will continue to be fragile.

The Government of the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the maintenance of Lebanon's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty, and stresses the importance of implementing Security Council resolution 425 (1978). We fully support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to expand its control and authority throughout the entire Lebanese territory. My delegation urges all parties to continue working together in a spirit of compromise in order to make further progress in the negotiations and to give impetus to the Middle East peace process for the amicable resolution of the problem, including the recovery of the occupied territories.

History teaches us that the signing of an agreement does not necessarily result in peace. Economic stability is still one of the most essential preconditions for true peace.

Although the Middle East is rich in both human and natural resources, what is notably insufficient is confidence in the economic viability of the area. In this regard, the Casablanca summit held last October marked the beginning of a new phase for the Middle East. The momentum created by the Casablanca summit must be accelerated, and the international community should make firm commitments to strengthening this crucial aspect of the peace process.

Fully recognizing the pressing need to bolster economic and social growth in the region, the Republic of Korea has built up close political and economic ties with the Middle Eastern countries. Its trade volume with the region continues to grow, and the Korean Government is encouraging its business community actively to increase direct investment in the region. Like many other countries, the Republic of Korea is fully prepared and will continue to take an active part in the economic development of the Middle East.

After many decades of suffering and struggle, the Middle East now has the chance not only to resolve its long-standing strife, but also to serve as an inspiration to other troubled regions in the settlement of their ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts. The Middle East States, with the support of the international community, must seize the historic opportunity before them to secure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. My delegation reaffirms the Republic of Korea's commitment to and support of those countries in their resolve to take on the difficult tasks which lie ahead in fulfilment of this goal.

Mr. Graf zu Rantzau (Germany): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the European Union and Austria.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993 greatly increased the momentum of the Middle East peace process.

The progress achieved since that date has not been limited to the Israeli-Palestinian track. Just one month ago, on 26 October, Israel and Jordan signed a Peace Treaty that opens a new chapter in the relations between those two countries. Within only a few months they had ended a state of war and laid out the foundations for comprehensive cooperation in all sectors. This not only will benefit the Israeli and Jordanian peoples but could become a model for cooperation in that region.

We call on all parties concerned to take the necessary steps to accelerate the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. We reaffirm our commitment to Security Council resolution 425 (1978) as a basis of the settlement of the Lebanese question.

The peace process has become irreversible. There is no alternative. We furthermore call upon those that are still on the outside to give up their opposition and participate in the process just as courageously as in the reconciliation of the peoples.

The Middle East is in need of a new impetus to its economic development. Improving the political situation will help build trust in the economy and thus enhance the prospects for regional and national economic growth. The Casablanca conference, which took place just one month ago, opened yet another chapter in the peace process. It provided new perspectives for regional economic cooperation by bringing together the public and private sectors in a joint forum. To promote intra-regional trade in goods and services, it is necessary to create the basic economic conditions. All steps that do away with outmoded trade restrictions are positive contributions to that end. In this context, we welcome the recent decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council with respect to the boycott against Israel, and in this context call upon the Arab League to lift the boycott completely and as soon as possible.

The European Union and its member States are willing to make their contribution to the peace process. They support the peace process in political, economic and financial terms. For 1993, the Union pledged 90 million ECUs for the Palestinian territories, and a total of 500 million ECUs for the period from 1994 to 1998.

In addition to those funds for the Palestinians, the European Union has earmarked for regional projects, within the framework of its horizontal Mediterranean policy, 1.8 billion ECUs in loans from the European Investment Bank. Under this programme it is also possible to promote projects in those States involved in the peace process that aim at higher regional integration.

The multilateral working groups within the Middle East peace process play an important and future-oriented role with respect to regional cooperation. The working group on regional economic development, in which the European Union is particularly involved, has prepared a number of comprehensive studies for the economic development of the region. These studies are a suitable basis for the reconstruction of the countries involved.

In addition, the European Union is also ready to assist in setting up new structures of regional cooperation. Based on its extensive experience with European integration and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the European Union could provide its partners south of the Mediterranean, if they so wish, with rich expertise.

Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union has already started to strengthen its relations with the countries of the region. On the basis of a strategy paper prepared by the European Commission, the European Council in Essen will examine the possibilities of intensifying the European Union's Mediterranean policy.

Closer ties with its Mediterranean neighbours is an important goal of the European Union. Peace, stability, security and sustained economic development of the region are of great importance to Europe.

Mr. Keating (New Zealand): Over the last year we have seen the hopes and goals that are embodied in the Middle East peace process beginning to be transformed into tangible achievements. For the first time there is a Palestinian Authority in Gaza and in Jericho. Palestinian responsibility for important areas of administration is being extended to the rest of the West Bank. Negotiations on early elections are under way. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel have signed a Treaty of Peace. These are courageous advances. They represent a turning-point in history. New Zealand congratulates the leaders and the people of Israel, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

We also congratulate those who have supported and sustained the momentum of peace. Among them is the Government of the United States, whose patient diplomacy has facilitated the series of agreements reached in the last two years. The Governments of Norway and Egypt have also made vital contributions. The efforts of the international community will continue to provide both indispensable support to the negotiating process and the means to translate its achievements into a daily reality for the peoples of the region.

Peace between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and Lebanon, is crucial to a comprehensive settlement. Recent high-level contacts with Syria have renewed our hopes for early progress towards substantive negotiations. Without reconciliation between Israel and Syria, the people of the region will be denied the just and lasting peace to which they have aspired for so long and which is their right.

The negotiations with Lebanon will also be vital. The settlement must reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The cycle of violence in southern Lebanon must be broken. The Lebanese people have known great suffering and conflict during many years of war. Serious divisions remain. Their resolution should be helped by the achievement of peace in the region.

Other positive actions are being taken by countries in the region to support the movement towards peace and greater prosperity for its peoples. In particular we congratulate King Hassan II and Morocco on hosting the recent Casablanca Economic Summit. This was an unprecedented gathering of business and Government leaders from throughout the region and the world. Such initiatives help to set a positive design for the future. The building of personal and commercial links will help to transform peace between Governments into peace between peoples. In this context we welcome also the decision by the Gulf Cooperation Council States to set a new path in developing their economic and commercial relations with Israel.

Those who reject peace can offer no answer but continued violence and lost opportunities. From Hebron, Afula and Tel Aviv to Buenos Aires and London, the last year has seen despicable and cowardly acts against innocent civilians. These acts were designed to erode the political will to carry on with the peace process. They are contrary to all that the United Nations stands for. Those responsible pit themselves against the wishes and standards of the international community.

As we commiserate with the victims of terrorism, we commend the restraint of leaders in the region who have maintained their vision and their commitment to the peace process. By their perseverance in these moments of tragedy, Israel and the Palestinians, in particular, have demonstrated that theirs is truly the peace of the brave.

The recent violence in Gaza is born, we believe, of frustration and deprivation. It threatens to reverse the hard-won political gains of the Palestinian people. Restraint and a turning away from extremist action are essential. But we know the patience of Palestinians has been stretched to breaking-point. If they are to continue to support the peace process, the Palestinian people must begin to see tangible improvements in their daily lives, and soon.

In particular, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza must take part in the early holding of free and fair elections which are their right. Adequate housing, water and schooling must be assured. The international community has pledged large-scale financial assistance to support self-rule. But if the aid pledged is to be useful, it must be delivered in a timely fashion, and, once delivered, used effectively and for clear and accountable purposes.

Israel and the Palestinians have overcome formidable obstacles. Yet the most difficult and divisive issues are still to be addressed. The Declaration of Principles and the Gaza/Jericho accord set a clear timetable for the beginning and conclusion of the

negotiations towards permanent status. It is vital that these extremely sensitive negotiations take place against a background of continuing and satisfactory progress. Only that will help to give both parties the further confidence needed to make the political decisions that will achieve a lasting accommodation.

The Declaration of Principles and the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty have given body to the principles of security and self-determination set out in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). All these instruments have New Zealand's full support.

Against the background of real political progress, we should not lose sight of the fact that peace will have meaning only if it enters people's daily lives. It is in that setting that we would like to pay tribute, as new institutions are being established, to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA's work has always been remarkable but we want to commend in particular its timely and effective Peace Implementation Programme. New Zealand will continue to give UNRWA its tangible support. We were glad of the opportunity to reaffirm this commitment to UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Ilter Turkmen, during his visit to New Zealand last month.

We believe that there is an urgent need to enhance the capacity of the United Nations and other agencies to cooperate effectively to meet the needs of Palestinians in the occupied territories, and in this context we welcome the Secretary-General's recent appointment of Ambassador Larsen of Norway as United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories.

It is our hope that this may also be a time of new beginnings elsewhere in the region. In particular, we refer to Iraq. We welcome Iraq's formal recognition on 10 November 1994 of the sovereignty of Kuwait and the United Nations demarcated border, in accordance with Security Council resolution 833 (1993). This is an important step forward. We also acknowledge the Iraqi Government's acceptance last year of its obligations under Security Council resolution 715 (1991), and its enhanced cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission's work on its weapons of mass destruction programmes, and in particular with long-term monitoring and verification. We look to Iraq to continue this cooperation, and to meet the other requirements set out in Security Council resolutions.

Had it not been for Iraq's threatening moves towards Kuwait in October, we believe that in the light of these positive developments the international community would by now have reached a position of greater confidence that Iraq's intentions towards its neighbours are peaceful. The willingness to develop serious military confidence-building measures with neighbouring States offers Iraq the scope for it to provide evidence of its peaceful intentions, and we look to Iraq to agree to concrete measures to this end.

Looking at the region as a whole, we see that the massive and destabilizing trade in lethal arms saps confidence. It undermines efforts to assure peace and security and to pursue open political dialogue. The Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, which is part of the multilateral track of the peace process, is, we believe, an important forum for confidence-building dialogue, and we continue to support it and the other tracks of the multilateral negotiations. Yet movement in the multilateral negotiations must be grounded in real progress at the political level between the parties directly engaged. We have witnessed dramatic progress over this last year, and we say to the region's partners in peace that New Zealand offers its continuing encouragement and support.

Mr. Butler (Australia): The Assembly takes up its agenda item on the situation in the Middle East at a critical time for the Middle East peace process.

The succession of historic agreements, which began with the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington on 13 September 1993, has laid the foundations for a comprehensive settlement to a dispute which has bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours for so long, depriving the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity.

We applaud the progress which has been made to date, the vision of those responsible for taking the hard decisions, and the untiring efforts of those who have played crucial roles, whether in facilitating early contacts or helping to bridge differences in negotiations.

Like other responsible countries, Australia has a deep interest in the Middle East and has been concerned for many years at the implications for global security of conflict in the region.

Australia's long-standing policy in this area is based on two main premises: first, a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries; and, secondly, recognition of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of an independent State.

Australia has supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for, and acknowledgment of, the sovereignty of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure boundaries.

But, while we are optimistic that a series of important first steps has been taken on the road to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, we must not become complacent about the remainder of the journey.

Continuing acts of violence and terrorism by extremist groups constitute a grave danger to the peace process, and threaten to drive the Middle East back into conflict and suffering.

The peace process is the only realistic path towards long-term regional security and cooperation. But the political achievements must be reinforced by the realization of economic benefits.

Not only must the arguments and violent actions of extremists on both sides be countered in a vigilant and balanced way, but the general population must be able to see quickly the tangible benefits to their daily lives deriving from the new arrangements.

Thus it is imperative not only that the parties to the agreements maintain their commitment and expedite the remaining processes of negotiation and implementation — most immediately, agreement on the framework and terms for Palestinian elections — but also that the international community ensure speedy and constant economic and political support for the new dispensation.

In recognition of the importance of providing international economic support and practical assistance to the new Palestinian Administration, Australia has committed $A15 million over three years in connection with the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho Accord. These funds will be spent principally on development activities crucial to the success of the new Palestinian Administration, such as income-generation, training, health, sanitation and water resources. The allocation also includes a $A1.4 million package to assist the Palestinian Authority to meet some of its more immediate start-up costs.

We urge others in the international community also to respond quickly, generously, practically and flexibly to the needs of the new Palestinian Administration.

Australia has been pleased to participate in the important, practically-orientated multilateral arm of the peace process. We are particularly committed to involvement in the Working Groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are areas where Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise, and where we judge we will be able to make a significant and needed contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region.

In April 1995 Australia will host a workshop on rainfall enhancement, which we hope will assist water managers and scientists to determine whether cloud-seeding holds the potential to enhance water availability in the countries of the Middle East. Australia has also provided practical input to the regional Working Group on arms control and regional security, in particular through ideas relating to a regional conflict-prevention centre.

Australia calls on all States in the region to participate fully in the multilateral phase of the peace process, which provides critical support to the bilateral talks by establishing the ground work for, and demonstrating what can be done through, regional cooperation.

In this context, we warmly welcomed the convening by His Majesty King Hassan of Morocco in Casablanca this past October of the Middle East/North Africa summit on economic cooperation. We believe the summit and the follow-up to it will greatly assist in the establishment of a blueprint for economic cooperation and regional development in the Middle East.

Australia welcomed the signing and ratification, during the current session of the General Assembly, of a Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel. We urge the speedy conclusion of treaties between Israel and Syria and Lebanon.

We continue to be encouraged by the progress made in Lebanon towards national reconciliation. We continue to oppose any activity by outside forces which compromises Lebanon's sovereignty. We maintain our support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and we believe the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon will enhance Lebanon's sovereignty.

Australia believes that, given the recent positive developments, it is in the best interests of further progress in the negotiations that all parties adopt policies that serve to build confidence and nurture an atmosphere of cooperation. Obdurate policies of the past would only obstruct cooperation and hinder peace. We therefore consider that the Arab economic boycott of Israel, a symbol of Arab hostility towards Israel, has no place as a negotiating point in the peace process. We believe the boycott unnecessarily constrains the economic development of the region and, in particular, may restrict the development of the new Palestinian administration. Australia welcomes the recent moves by a number of Arab States to wind back the boycott and calls on all members of the Arab League to pursue this path as a practical and concrete step towards peace and towards consolidating the agreements already achieved.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all States of the Middle East that have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and all parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their obligations thereunder.

Australia continues fully to support the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the continuing task of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and investigating the Iraqi weapons programmes.

We were dismayed by the recent movement of Iraqi forces close to the border with Kuwait and strongly support Security Council resolution 949 (1994), adopted in response to that provocation. We were pleased by the subsequent withdrawal of Iraqi forces to their original positions and the formal recognition of Kuwait by Iraq earlier this month. This is a step in the right direction and indicates, we hope, a realization by Iraq that cooperation with the Security Council and the United Nations Special Commission and compliance with all of Iraq's obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions — not threats of military action against Kuwait — are the only ways to achieve the lifting of sanctions.

Australia is particularly concerned about the situation of civilian groups in Iraq and calls on the Iraqi Government to ensure that all of its citizens enjoy equal human and political rights, in line with Security Council resolution 688 (1991).

Responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government. Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions that would allow it to resume oil exports, so that the hardships that are evident among the civilian population can be addressed.

Australia also supports the Security Council's actions on Libya. We again urge Libya to comply fully with the Council's requirements, as set out in its resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993).

In conclusion, the situation in the Middle East has been a preoccupation of the General Assembly virtually since the birth of the United Nations. At times, it has seemed the most acute and intractable of regional conflicts threatening international peace and security. It is appropriate and heartening that, as the United Nations approaches its fiftieth year, a peace process is in train which, with international support and good faith and political will on the part of those directly involved, allows us to contemplate a new environment in the Middle East - an environment in which Arabs and Israelis can live together in peace, in cooperation and in well-being.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Yesterday, I had the opportunity to elaborate on the question of Palestine, which is the core and essence of the Middle East problem. The practices and policies of the occupying Zionist regime against the Palestinian people and other Muslim countries have constituted the main source of instability, violence and distrust in the region during the last four decades.

The Zionist regime does not confine itself to occupying the Holy Land of Palestine and violating the basic human rights of Palestinians. The Golan Heights and southern Lebanon continue to be under Israeli occupation. Moreover, the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in the occupied territories face daily aggressive practices by the occupying forces, and the people of

southern Lebanon are the target of assassination and air strikes. Israel continues to perpetrate acts of terrorism that include the killing and torturing of Palestinians, the massacre of worshippers, the kidnapping of Lebanese citizens and the bombing of civilian areas in Lebanon.

These crimes and the repeated acts of aggression committed by Israel have met with the legitimate resistance of the people in the occupied territories and southern Lebanon. Not surprisingly, they have been labelled fanatics, radicals, fundamentalists and terrorists. It is ironic that the occupying regime not only expects the general surrender and submission of all the peoples and groups in the occupied lands but also wishes to silence any voice raised in moral support of the Palestinian cause, which reveals that regime's true intention of perpetuating its oppression and subjugation of the Palestinian people — now under the pretext of a peace process. The Zionist regime will spare no effort, however foul, indecent and slanderous, to attack those who oppose their aggressive policies and the occupation.

Israel's real and ultimate objective has been and continues to be the perpetuation of its occupation. Today, under the disguise of the peace process, this very policy is being pursued through the repression of Muslims and other opponents of the illegal and aggressive Israeli occupation. In our view, the current process lacks realism and will not lead to real and lasting peace. The return of peace and stability to the Middle East will depend as much on the liberation of the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon as on the full realization of all rights of the people of Palestine, the return of all Palestinian refugees and the liberation of all occupied territories.

The Zionist regime has capitalized extensively on the introduction of an artificial threat to our region for the purpose of diverting the attention of the international community from the question of Palestine. It is a well established fact that Israel orchestrates a campaign of misinformation and propaganda against others and tries to foster discord and distrust among States and peoples in the region.

Israel's nuclear threat is another source of grave concern in the Middle East region. The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his statement during the General Assembly's general debate earlier in this session, said:

> "Israel's nuclear programme has exacerbated the arms race in the region and has forced others within the area to turn to more advanced conventional weaponry. Some States in the region have made their accession to a number of disarmament treaties conditional upon Israel's acceptance of international regimes established to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 5th meeting, p. 39)*

The importance of regional disarmament has always been emphasized by the Islamic Republic of Iran. I should like to reiterate once more our commitment to the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We shall support any genuine, comprehensive and non-discriminatory initiative to establish such a zone so that the International Atomic Energy Agency can expand its verification system to cover all nuclear facilities in the Middle East.

In addition to Israel's continuous threats, interference by foreign Governments in the affairs of regional States has led to negative perceptions in the region. This has impeded serious dialogue and the consideration of constructive suggestions for the creation of peace, stability and security in some subregions of the Middle East, such as the Persian Gulf.

The Islamic republic of Iran, which is the country with the longest shore line along the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, has spared no effort to promote and maintain peace and security in the area. We have repeatedly called for the creation of a forum, with the participation of the Persian Gulf countries, to consider and develop confidence-building measures that are compatible with the requirements of the region, taking into account the principles of respect for internationally recognized borders, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. We shall undoubtedly continue our efforts to enhance peace and security in the area and to promote the culture of regional self-confidence.

Mr. Belyaev (Belarus) *(interpretation from Russian)*: More than a year has passed since the historic handshake between the leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which brought a totally new dimension to the situation in the Middle East. Traditional stereotypes have been shattered, and there has been a radical change in the deeply rooted images of the enemy that both sides created over the decades of this apparently utterly unresolvable conflict. Confrontation is yielding to

partnership, and this is making an extraordinarily positive impact not only on the Israelis and the Palestinians and on the Middle East region but on the international community as a whole.

The Republic of Belarus welcomes the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which is the very important first step towards the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Our delegation expresses its full support for the patient and fruitful efforts of the sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East — the Russian Federation and the United States. We are also grateful for the great diplomatic skills of Norway, which played a significant part in advancing the initial success of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The achievement of a number of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization — including the accord of 4 May 1994 establishing Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho and the agreement of 24 August 1994 concerning the expansion of autonomy on the West Bank of the Jordan — gives concrete form to the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation that is becoming a decisive factor in the development of Israeli-Palestinian relations.

With the signing of these documents, the Arab people of Palestine, for the first time since the creation of the United Nations, sees a real possibility of beginning to enjoy its inalienable right to self-determination, its right to elect an authoritative organ of State power, its right to develop independently the spheres of education, health, tourism, social security and taxation, and its right to security guaranteed by a national police force.

In the view of our delegation, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, the establishment of a joint Israeli-Palestinian coordinating committee to secure cooperation in the area of civilian government and the development of the banking system, agriculture and industry along Palestinian lines are making a significant contribution to the strengthening of mutual trust between Israel and the autonomous Palestinian authority.

Nevertheless, there is still a wide range of problems and contradictions to be resolved. If the long-standing hopes for peace and justice are to be fulfilled, the parties to the negotiations must work within the peace process drawn up in Madrid and on the basis of implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The support of the United Nations and the international community is very important for reinforcing the success that has been achieved. In our view, there is an urgent need to render the Palestinian people assistance in resolving those issues linked with effective organization of self-government, the restoration and development of the infrastructures and the establishment of machinery for its future economic activity.

Here Belarus wishes to express its appreciation for the activities of the working groups within the framework of the so-called multilateral tracks. We also welcome the establishment of the United Nations contact group for support of the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

A lasting peace in the Middle East must be comprehensive. To ensure genuine stability in the region, all parties to this extended conflict, especially Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, need to contribute to a settlement. The Republic of Belarus welcomes the signing on 26 October 1994 of the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Jordan and believes that it is a consolidating factor for a peaceful settlement in this hotbed of tension and an exemplary model for other countries of the region. The Republic of Belarus also hopes that Israel and Syria will be able to arrive at a *rapprochement* of their positions and find common ground for peace.

We are following hopefully the improvements in the situation in Lebanon, though stability there remains fragile because the long-awaited comprehensive settlement has still not been reached. Our delegation is in favour of the full restoration of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The Republic of Belarus takes a positive view of the decision of the Revolutionary Command Council and the National Assembly of Iraq concerning official recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Kuwait and of the international border between the two States. We wish to express our hope for a practical implementation of this decision in the very near future.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus believes that the active participation of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the Secretary-General,

in the present stage of the process of a Middle East settlement is an essential ingredient for achieving success. We highly value the efforts of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for the maintenance of peace in the region. The Republic of Belarus welcomes the activity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which, within the bounds of its resources, is doing all in its power to render comprehensive assistance to the refugees.

In view of the spirit of good will and determination demonstrated recently, the Middle East can become the basis for a peaceful and lasting international order replacing the era of global confrontation. The international community bears the responsibility for fully advancing this process. The Republic of Belarus is ready to cooperate actively in the achievement, by civilized means, of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): At the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the delegation of Brazil welcomed the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization and expressed the hope that it would pave the way for further significant transformations in the Middle East.

The period that has elapsed since then has been marked by important achievements that are turning hopes into realities. The Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May last and the Agreement on early empowerment of 29 August last have enabled the setting up of the Palestinian Authority, a first and fundamental step towards the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and nationhood.

The recent Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel augurs well for the remaining tracks of the direct negotiations. It is our expectation that progress will soon be achieved regarding the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Nevertheless, my Government is concerned at the situation in Lebanon. The efforts conducted the by Lebanese Government with a view to rebuilding the State and fostering national reconciliation deserve strong support. Accordingly, the international community should reaffirm its commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders, as stated in Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The progress achieved towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East has been challenged by opponents of the Declaration of Principles. The adoption of Security Council resolution 904 (1994), in the aftermath of the massacre in the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron, helped to defuse a particularly destabilizing blow to the peace process. It should be recalled that lives have been claimed by outrageous eruptions of violence not only in the Middle East but also in other regions, including our own. We reiterate, in this respect, our condemnation of the abhorrent attack against the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina in Buenos Aires.

We encourage the leaders on all sides to persevere in their efforts for a peaceful solution despite the attempts to derail the peace process. The resort to violence and subsequent retaliation seek only to perpetuate the cycle of violence and hatred that has plagued the region in the past. Lessons could be drawn from the peaceful settlement of the question of South Africa, one of the most intractable situations of the post-war period, which was achieved through the patient diplomatic and political efforts of all concerned.

The United Nations has been actively involved in the Middle East crisis, not only through peace-keeping operations and relevant diplomatic initiatives but also through programmes of economic, social and humanitarian assistance. My delegation notes with satisfaction the continuing participation of the United Nations in the multilateral segment of the talks between the Israeli and Arab parties. I wish to stress in particular the important role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose peace implementation programme is helping to promote an environment conducive to the strengthening of the peace process through the socio-economic rehabilitation of the occupied territories. We should also mention the creation of the post of Special Coordinator, who is entrusted with ensuring effective coordination of the Organization's efforts in the region.

The promotion of economic development and improvement of the quality of life in the occupied territories are crucial for the creation of the necessary conditions to ensure a smooth implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The development of economic ties is instrumental in building confidence between the Palestinian and Israeli communities. A greater

communality of interests will surely assist in moving the peace process forward.

The unswerving support of the international community is crucially important to maintain the momentum in the peace process. The donors' conference held in Washington and the Economic Summit convened in Casablanca stand out, in this context, as significant initiatives. The newly created Palestinian Authority will require all possible support to face the formidable task of institution-building ahead of it. We have taken note with satisfaction that steps are already being taken in that direction.

Brazil will continue to pay close attention to the unfolding of events in the Middle East. We stand ready to participate in international efforts, particularly those supported by the United Nations, in the fields of technical and scientific cooperation and those that could benefit from the dynamism and creativity of the private sector.

Finally, I should stress that the sponsors of the draft resolutions submitted under various agenda items relating to the Middle East have continued to introduce improvements in their texts with a view to updating and harmonizing them with the new political atmosphere in the region. These signs are a welcome indication that the times of strife are finally coming to an end and giving way to an era of cooperation and understanding among all peoples in the Middle East.

Mr. Lian (Norway): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

The past year has seen great achievements, as well as temporary set-backs, in the Middle East peace process. The implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements is moving steadily forward, although behind schedule. A Palestinian Authority has been set up in Gaza and Jericho in the space of a few months under the leadership of Chairman Yasser Arafat. Close to 1 million Palestinians are now able to take responsibility for their own lives. A Palestinian police force of more than 9,000 men has been set up and is being funded under difficult circumstances. With the recent agreements on early empowerment, the Palestinians will now be responsible for education, health care, social affairs, taxation and tourism in the rest of the West Bank, in addition to Jericho and Gaza. These are no minor achievements.

The leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) deserve our praise for their outstanding courage and commitment to move ahead with the peace process despite internal opposition and violent attempts to derail that process. The parties have clearly demonstrated that there can be no going back to the old days of conflict and confrontation. The Nordic countries condemn those forces that are trying to destroy the peace process through violence and terror. We must not let them succeed.

We welcome the many signs of normalization in the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. On 26 October this year Prime Minister Rabin and His Majesty King Hussein signed a historic peace agreement ending the 46-year-old state of war between Israel and Jordan and paving the way now for the establishment of diplomatic relations between those two countries. This represents a major step towards a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The beginning of normalization between Israel and Morocco and Tunisia are other welcome signs, as is the announcement of the Gulf States to consider easing the Arab boycott of Israel.

The Nordic countries hope that the bilateral talks between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon will be inspired by these positive developments and that they will soon lead to concrete results towards peace in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The mere fact that the economic summit in Casablanca could take place at all clearly demonstrates that a profound change of climate has occurred in the Middle East. New possibilities for regional cooperation have opened up, which, in turn, should inspire further progress in the peace process. The Nordic countries welcome the emergence of such efforts with a view to regional cooperation, and we look forward to their further development.

These events entail obligations and responsibilities for the international community. Through the actions of each of us we must foster the new climate of cooperation in the Middle East by mobilizing the financial resources needed to secure peace and to promote economic development. A good start was made at the donors' conference in Washington on 1 October last year, where pledges of over $2 billion were made to assist the Palestinians. The problem is, however, that only a minor part of those pledges have been disbursed. Most donors

have chosen to focus on medium- and long-term development projects that take time to materialize.

As we see it, the time has now come to do first things first. The recent riots in Gaza testify to the deteriorating economic situation in the Palestinian self-rule areas. Last year's optimism and hopes of a better life have now given way to disappointment and political in-fighting on the Palestinian side. Border closures between Israel and Gaza have increased the already widespread unemployment in the Gaza Strip, and, in the absence of quick and visible improvements, the whole Middle East peace process could be in danger.

Therefore, our challenge now is clearly to mobilize international aid that can make a difference on the ground in Gaza and Jericho by improving living conditions for ordinary Palestinians, by creating employment and by instilling a sense of optimism about and belief in the future.

Donors must as a matter of urgency help to ensure that the Palestinian Authority has sufficient funds to finance start-up and recurrent costs for the coming months. This is especially true for the police force, for the early empowerment areas and for transitional projects to promote the rapid creation of jobs. The situation requires both a more speedy disbursement of pledges and greater flexibility in switching funds from long-term to short-term needs. If we fail to act rapidly on this, prospects for political stability and economic growth could be seriously undermined. At the same time, international aid for the improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinians can only be complementary to the efforts of the parties directly concerned.

Against this background, the Nordic countries welcome the fact that the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee held in Brussels on 29 and 30 November was able to bridge a substantial part of the Palestinian budget needs. We also welcome the fact that the meeting endorsed the understanding between the PLO and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on Palestinian budget requirements and future donor assistance. This understanding should form a good basis for an accelerated pace and greater flexibility in the assistance efforts. However, despite these achievements, there remain great needs that have to be met. The meeting in Brussels thus discussed the need for taking decisive action to counter the sense of frustration and hopelessness that many Palestinians now feel, and it stressed the requirement for an all-out effort to accelerate the progress of the Palestinian development programme. Let me therefore again emphasize that how we react to this challenge can be decisive for the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

The Nordic countries highly appreciate the strong United Nations support of the peace process. United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have for a long time given invaluable assistance to the Palestinians, and their activities will continue to be important. The appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Terje Rød Larsen, has underlined the commitment of the United Nations to further strengthen its role in the peace process. A strengthened United Nations role is highly welcomed by the Nordic countries.

It is important that the debates and resolutions of the General Assembly try to reflect the positive developments in the Middle East. We should therefore concentrate our efforts on solving practical problems and exploiting every possibility to enlarge the common ground. Norway has contributed in this respect by preparing and presenting a new draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the Palestinian Police Force". The Nordic countries hope that it will be adopted unanimously.

The Nordic countries would like to reaffirm their readiness to continue to play an active and balanced part in assisting the peace process in the Middle East. Peace and security are the prerequisites for economic development and prosperity — prosperity which a large portion of the population of the Middle East region has so far been unable to enjoy in spite of abundant natural and human resources. The challenges are great and the stakes are high. But so are the rewards, if the peace process can be successfully completed.

Mr. Stadthagen (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Our country believes that this is the time for reconciliation in the Middle East. We are convinced that the time has come to abandon the decades-old confrontation and transform the region into an oasis of peace in which tolerance, mutual respect, freedom, peaceful coexistence and economic and social development prevail. The time has come to take advantage of the positive developments on the world political scene.

At this historic juncture in the negotiations in the Middle East the parties to the conflict absolutely must continue their creative efforts to find the ways and means peacefully to achieve the long-coveted peace, not only for the Arab and Israeli peoples but for the entire international community. The role of those who have acted as facilitators, including the United States, Norway and Egypt, should also be recognized. Our country will continue to support all efforts made in that region in the systematic search for peace. We also support the approach that the General Assembly has constantly advocated — namely, that peace in the Middle East is indivisible and must be based on a broad and comprehensive solution to the problem.

The experience of Nicaragua, a country that has suffered the consequences of a decade-long political and military conflict, has convinced it that a peaceful and negotiated solution to the problems of the Middle East and flexibility must remain the bases of the negotiation process now under way in that region. They are the bases for the achievement of stability and respect for the human rights of all parties.

Our country has been following with great hope the developments in the peace process that began in Madrid in October 1991. The Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization is a historic agreement with great possibilities for the future. In our opinion, we can take great encouragement from the progress and success achieved in the implementation of these principles and in the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area in Cairo on 4 May 1994. Nevertheless, further progress must be made.

We agree that the situation in Palestine has been the core of the controversy in the Middle East. A solution to the situation in that region cannot be found without a lasting agreement on the problem of the Palestinian people. Although progress has been made, we are concerned at what we read in the Secretary-General's reports on the situation, *inter alia*, on the economic difficulties facing these territories.

Our delegation recognizes that there is an urgent need for bilateral and multilateral assistance for the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. This will be a decisive factor in the success of the peace process. The international community as a whole must respond concretely — not with promises but with deeds — in order to strengthen the transition process in Palestine through sustained economic and technical cooperation that will make it possible to consolidate the institutions and generate productive employment, so that the embryonic peace can be buttressed by tangible results in the shortest possible time.

We welcome with great satisfaction the signing of the Peace Treaty between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan on 26 October 1994. With the signing of these agreements, the state of war between Jordan and Israel was brought to an end. The historic statements made for the first time by an Arab leader and an Israeli leader before the United States Congress marked a new stage in the relations between those two countries since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

We firmly believe that the broad political will shown by the representatives of Israel, Palestine and Jordan in the adoption of these historic agreements must continue to be shown in order to find a definitive solution to the outstanding problems in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the same context of promoting peace, my delegation hopes that the talks between Israel and Syria will continue, in a spirit of flexibility and realism, so that agreements that both parties find reasonable can be reached, with a view to consolidating the peace process that began in October 1991 in Madrid.

We welcome also the progress towards peace and cooperation that has been achieved between Israel and other Arab States, in particular, the agreements with Morocco of September 1994 and those with Tunisia of October 1994. The step taken by the Gulf States to put an end to the secondary and tertiary terms of the embargo, as well as the economic summit, recently organized in Casablanca, Morocco, by King Hassan II, also rank as important initiatives for the promotion of the confidence that can lead to lasting peace in the Middle East.

The problems of the Middle East are multi-faceted. They have not only political but also military, legal, humanitarian, religious and historic aspects. Hence, the path towards a lasting, just and comprehensive peace has become more difficult. This process requires not only patience but also sustained efforts to eliminate all the barriers, the psychological barriers in particular, that still obstruct the peace process. None the less, we are certain that the Arab and Israeli leaders will be able to wisely guide their efforts to find a definitive solution to the problems of the Middle East.

The Government of Nicaragua, which is promoting a broad process of national reconciliation, hopes that further progress will be made in the talks among all the parties. Serious and transparent dialogue is the best way to forget once and for all a history of hatred and discord that has lasted for generations. This is the time for reconciliation, the time to begin, in peace, a new era of prosperity and stability in the Middle East. A lasting solution to the conflict in that region will be one of the greatest contributions to the building of a new international order that mankind demands today.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): One representative has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second intervention, and that delegations shall make their statements from their seats.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In his statement this morning, the representative of Australia urged Libya to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993). This gives the impression that Libya has made no response to those resolutions. My delegation wishes to correct the statement of the representative of Australia, who appears to be unaware of Libya's actions in compliance with those resolutions.

Libya has responded to those Security Council resolutions. Libya has condemned international terrorism in all its forms and has declared its readiness to cooperate in all international efforts to eliminate that phenomenon. Libya has proposed the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to consider terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism, of which Libya has been a victim.

In its response to the Security Council resolutions, Libya has shown sufficient flexibility, and has offered several proposals regarding the fair and impartial trial of the two persons suspected of having a relation with the Pan Am 103 incident. Although there has been no response on the part of those concerned to those proposals, which were consonant with international law, Libya has continued to cooperate and has demonstrated continuous readiness to solve this problem and to end the unjust sanctions imposed on the Libyan people.

The most recent proposal accepted in this respect was that of the League of Arab States: that the suspects be tried, under Scottish law, at the headquarters of the International Court of Justice. Libya went even further in stating that it had no objection to the two suspects placing themselves in the hands of the League of Arab States until agreement is reached on the time and venue of the trial.

This makes clear the steps taken by Libya in response to Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993). We hope the Australian delegation will take note of these facts, which have been communicated to the United Nations and duly circulated in official documents of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.